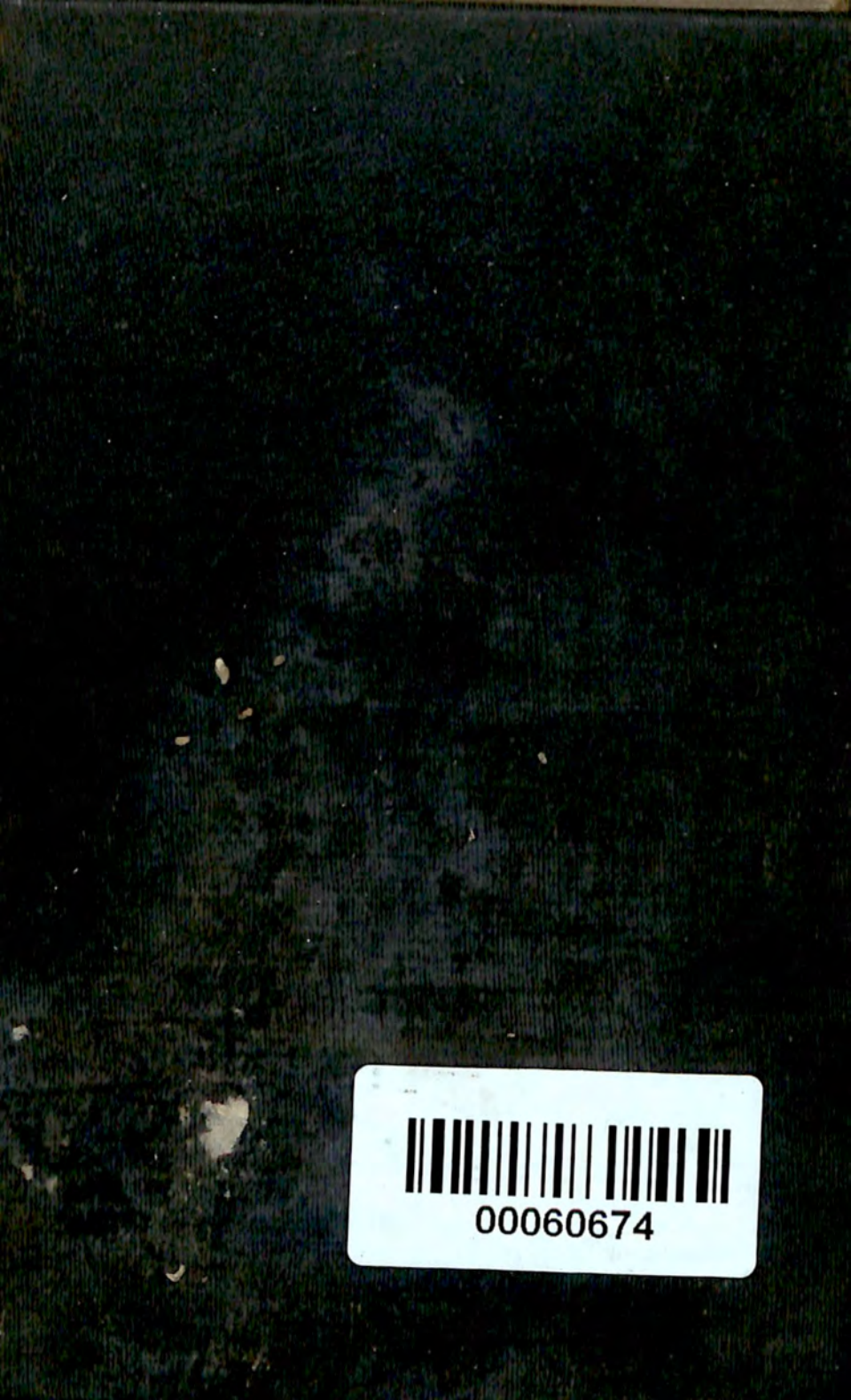

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SKETCHES OF PERSIA.

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BY THE LATE MAJOR-GENERAL

SIR JOHN MALCOLM,

AUTHOR OF 'HISTORY OF PERSIA,' 'LIFE OF LORD CLIVE,' &c.

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TO

JOHN FLEMING, Esq., M.D., F.R.S., &c.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL BOARD OF CALCUTTA,

BY

HIS MOST SINCERE AND ATTACHED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

ONCE upon a time this island of Great Britain had some spots where men and women and little children dwelt, or were believed to dwell, in innocence, ignorance, and content. Travellers seldom visited them; poets saw them in their dreams, and novelists told stories of them: but these days are now past. Thanks to steam-boats and stage-coaches, there is not a spot to which an ignorant or sage human being can retire, where his eye will not be delighted or offended by a dark column of smoke, or his ear gratified or grated by the rattling wheels of a carriage. It is perhaps a consequence of this invasion of retirement that all are tempted from their homes, and that while one half of the population is on the highways, the other half is on the narrow seas. This love of travel, however, is in the vast majority limited to the neighbouring countries of Europe; but the ardour of curiosity, and an ambitious desire of escaping from the beaten track, has of late years induced not a few scientific and enterprising travellers to overrun the renowned lands of Greece and Egypt, whose inhabitants stare with astonishment at · en flying with im-

patience from town to town, exploring ruins; measuring pyramids; groping in dark caverns; analyzing the various properties of earth, air, and water; carrying off mutilated gods and goddesses; packing up common stones and pebbles, as if they were rubies and diamonds; and even bearing away the carcases of the dead, strangely preferring the withered frame of a female mummy, which has been mouldering for four thousand years in its sepulchre, to the loveliest specimens of living and animated beauty.

The uniformed natives of these countries, whose condition is much to be deplored, are not aware that the great Samuel Johnson has said, that "Whatever raises the past, the distant, and the future, above the present, exalts us in the dignity of human beings;" which is an unanswerably good reason for the preference given to mummies over every living object, however fascinating.

The rage of the present day for mummies and other delectable reliques of antiquity has deluged Egypt with itinerant men of science and research, who have quite exhausted that land of wonders; and those who have lately visited it have been reduced, from actual want of other aliment, to the necessity of preying upon their predecessors, many of whom have been cruelly mangled, and some wholly devoured.

These wandering tribes of writers, who are, in a certain degree, subject to the same motives which force the hordes of Tartary to change their places of abode, have recently begun to migrate into Syria, Asia Minor, and some have actually penetrated as far as Persia. This has given me no small alarm, for I have long had designs upon that country myself: I had seen something of it, and had in-

dulged a hope that I might, at my leisure, gratify the public by allowing them to participate in my stock of information; but being of an indolent disposition, I deferred the execution of this, my favourite plan, until that anticipated period of repose, the prospect of which, however distant, has always cheered a life of vicissitude and labour.

Nothing that had hitherto appeared respecting Persia at all frightened me. I am no historian, therefore I did not tremble at Sir John Malcolm's ponderous quartos; I am no tourist, Mr. Morier's Journeys gave me no uneasiness; the learned Researches of Sir William Ouseley were enough to terrify an antiquarian, but that was not my trade; and, as I happen to have clumsy, untaught fingers, and little if any taste for the picturesque, I viewed without alarm the splendid volumes of Sir Robert Ker Porter. Far different, however, was the case when that rogue Hajji Baba made his appearance. I perused him with anxiety, but was consoled by finding that, though he approached the very borders of my province, he had made no serious inroads. I was roused, however, into action, and determined instantly to rummage those trunks into which my sketches had been thrown as they were finished, and where many of them had slumbered undisturbed for nearly thirty years.

I must warn the reader that the trunks here spoken of bear no resemblance whatever to those imaginary boxes which it has lately been the fashion to discover, filled with MSS. unaccountably deposited in them by some strange and mysterious wight; mine are all real, well-made, strong,

iron-clamped boxes, which I had prepared with great care, in order that they might preserve the papers I from time to time intrusted to them. I am well aware that this plain and true statement of the fact will, with many, diminish the interest of these pages; but with others it will increase it; for they will be gratified to find in them sketches taken on the spot, while the facts and the feelings to which they relate were fresh and warm before me; and I can truly affirm, that the sense, the nonsense, the anecdotes, the fables, and the tales,—all, in short, which these volumes contain, with the exception of a few sage reflections of my own, do actually belong to the good people amongst whom they profess to have been collected.

Yet, partial as I was to my secret hoard, it was long before I could make up my mind to publish. While I was one day musing upon the subject, my attention was accidentally drawn to a volume of Persian poetry that was lying on the table. A fâl or lot, I exclaimed, shall put an end to my indecision! Saying which, according to the usage of my Persian friends in like cases, I shut my eyes, opened the book, and counting seven pages back, read the first four lines, as follows:

"Her kih sefer kerdeh pesendeedeh sheved
Z'âeena-e-noor kemâl-esh deedeh sheved
Pâkeezeter ez âb nebâshed cheezee
Her jâh kih kooned mekâm gendeedeh sheved."

"Whoever has travelled shall be approved;
His perfections shall be reflected as from a mirror of light.
There can be nothing more pure than water;
But wherever it stagnates it becomes offensive."

My delight was excessive, and I despatched my manu-

scripts forthwith to the bookseller; who has been desired to keep me minutely informed of the success of these volumes; and a hint has been given him, that if they meet with encouragement, the contents of the boxes before mentioned are far from being exhausted.

NOTE TO THE READER.

THE usual orthography of some proper names has been altered, with a view of rendering them more conformable to the pronunciation and the grammar of the languages to which they belong. For instance, our old friend and favourite, the caliph Haroun-al-Raschid of the Arabian tales, appears under his Arabic name of Haroon-oor-Rasheed. The critical reader will also discover that a few of the Eastern words have not always been spelled exactly alike. This unintentional typographical inaccuracy was caused by the peculiar circumstances under which these volumes were printed.

SKETCHES OF PERSIA.

CHAPTER I.

Voyage from Bombay to the Persian Gulf.

THERE is a monotony in a long sea-voyage, particularly to passengers, which those who have never traversed the wide ocean cannot well understand. A fair or contrary wind, a calm or a storm, a man overboard, a strange sail, or the hooking of a shark, are events which rouse for the moment; but the passenger soon sinks again into his listless, restless life, sitting half an hour below, walking another half hour on deck, holding on by the rigging when the ship rolls, looking over the gangway when the sea is smooth, watching the man casting the log, and waiting with anxiety to hear the latitude announced at twelve o'clock. His little incidents are, being in the way of the officer of the watch when upon deck, and when below disturbing the captain's calculations of the longitude, by laughing or talking with other idlers; for that is the class in which he is registered in the muster-roll of the crew. With me, however, there is a pursuit which helps to beguile a long voyage. I am always on the look-out for odd characters, and these abound at sea; from which circumstance, I suppose, we have our common phrase of calling an out-of-the-way person "an odd fish," alluding to the element where he is generally found. Such a one I met on board the frigate in which we sailed for Persia, and I shall give a sketch of him as taken at the moment.

This man, whose name was Peterson, was what he appeared to be, a blunt sailor: his experience in the Indian seas recommended him to the situation he now occupied, as acting master

of a frigate: he was a figure to play Falstaff, being very stout, and nearly six feet high. He wore his clothes loose, and, when he came on board, a sailor, struck with his appearance, turning his quid as he eyed him, exclaimed, "We shall never be in distress for canvass; our new master wears a spare set of sails."

I shall give Peterson's history in his own words, as related after dinner the day he came on board. "I have been," said he, "thirty-two years at sea, and have seen both calms and storms. When a young man, I was stuck full of arrows by some savage Americans; and but for a tobacco-box, which stopped one that hit upon a vital part, I should have gone to Davy's locker at that time. Since I came to this country, twenty-eight years ago, I have had many ups and downs, but weathered them all pretty tolerably till three years since, when coming to Bombay in a small sloop, I was laid on board by some pirates belonging to Bate.* We fought as well as we could, but the rascals were too many for us, and while we were defending one part of the vessel they sprung on board at another, giving a fire at the same time, which killed my owner close beside me. A passenger then jumped overboard, for which, thought I, 'you are a fool;' for let the worst come to the worst, a man may do that at any time. One of these fellows looking at me cried 'Mar haramee,' which means, 'kill the rascal.' 'Mut mar,' 'don't kill him,' said a soft-hearted looking fellow, and defended me from the blow; so they did not kill me, but stripped and bound me to the capstan, and away they took us to Bate. When we came there, the chief or head fellow came on board, and I fully expected we should be sent ashore and hanged. When this chap sent for me, I was a pretty figure; I had not been shaved for three weeks, and I was wrapped round with a top-gallant studding sail. 'What are you?' said the fellow. 'An Englishman,' said I. 'Very well; I won't kill you.' 'Faith,' thinks I, 'I'm very glad of that.' 'My people,' says he, 'are all big thieves.' 'Egad,' thinks I, 'you are the biggest of the gang.' He then asked me what money or property I had; and I thought at one time he looked as if he would have given it back; so I tells him all, even to my gold watch. The whole was about five thousand rupees. 'Well,

* The island of Bate is situated at the north-western extremity of the Gulf of Cutch.

well,' says he, 'it shall be taken care of;' and I suppose it was, for I never saw a rap of it, only five rupees that the villain gave me, in a present, as he called it, to bear my expenses when he sent me and my crew to Bombay.

"I left Bate, notwithstanding my losses, as happy as could be, to get out of their clutches alive; and after some days we reached Bombay in a pretty pickle; my feet were swelled, I had not shaved since my capture, and I had only a few ragged clothes on. Two rupees were left out of the five, and with them I went to a tavern and ordered breakfast; when it was over I told one of the servants to call his master. In came an English waiter, with his head all powdered, shuffling and mincing, saying, as he entered the room, 'Do you want me, Sir?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I want you: I have been plundered, and have got no cash, and will thank you to lend me twenty or thirty rupees.' 'What are you—a common sailor?' 'Not quite,' says I; 'but I want the money to get a few clothes, and then I can go to my friends.' 'I am not master of this house,' said this gentleman, and out he skips. I saw no more of him or his twenty rupees; and when I told a servant to get me a tiffin, he said I had not paid for my breakfast. As I was jawing with this fellow, a Parsee* came in, and asked me if I had not better go to the bazar, and borrow some clothes, and then go to my friends. Well, God knows, I had not much heart to do any thing; for the unkindness of my countryman, after all I had suffered, cut me just as if I had been cut with a knife; but I thought I might as well follow the Parsee, who was one of those fellows that go about Bombay trying what they can make of every body they meet. I goes first to one shop, and tries things on; and when they fit, I says, 'I will pay you to-morrow;' but the fellow says, 'No; ready money.' Well, I was obliged to strip again: this happened at four shops, and I was quite tired, when a good fellow, who keeps No. 18, of the Great Bazar, said I might fit myself, and pay when I could. I then got rigged, and stood away for Mr. Adamson, whom I had before known. I met him at the door of

* Parsee is the name of the descendants of the ancient Persians, who still retain the usages and religion of their forefathers. There are many of these followers of Zoroaster at Bombay, where they form, if not the most numerous, the most respectable part of the native community.

his house, and he did not know me; but when I told him my story—'Oh!' says he, quite pitiful, 'are you the poor fellow who has suffered so much? I will get you a berth in another ship — and take that.' So saying, he gives me one hundred rupees. Well, I thanked him; and next goes to Captain Phillips, and got from him a present of two gold mohurs, and six suits of good clothes, from top to toe. He made me report and write three or four sheets about Bate, and how I had been used; and then sent me to the governor, Mr. Duncan, who gets all the long story from me again, and then gave me one hundred rupees. I had now two hundred and thirty rupees and clean rigging. I goes again to the tavern, and sings out lustily for tiffin. Well, they look and sees I am quite a different thing from before, and so become mighty civil and attentive. The waiter begs my pardon—says he was mistaken—and that he had twenty rupees ready, and would give me any aid I liked. 'D—n your aid,' says I; 'you are very ready to give it to any person who does not want it.' It was a great treat to me to serve him as I did: I eat my tiffin, paid for it on the table, and left the house.

"Well," said Peterson, "to make a long story short, I went in a China ship, and last year got the command of a vessel belonging to a Persian merchant, who trades to the Gulf. He was a bad owner, had no credit, and, what with that and the fear of the Arabs, I had a troublesome time of it. We parted; and he has got another captain, rather black to be sure, but he likes him all the better, I suppose, from being nearer his own vile colour than I was; and I, by this means, being along shore, having no money or credit, am glad to come as acting-master of this here ship. I thank God I have good health, and don't complain; many are worse off than I am."

Such was our master's* history. In a conversation I had with him, as we were walking the deck, the day we arrived at Muscat, I asked him if he had a wife? "No;" said he. "You were never married, then?" "I didn't say so," he replied. "I beg your pardon," said I. "Oh! no harm, no harm! the honest truth never need be hid: I was married: but taking a

* This old sailor is now no more. He continued unlucky till he found a generous patron at Bombay, whose active benevolence gave repose and comfort to his latter days.

long voyage, being away seven years, and my letters (of which, by the by, I wrote but few) miscarrying, what does my wife do, but marries again. This I heard when I got home to England." "And what did you do?" said I; "did you inquire after her?" "Indeed I did not," said Peterson with great indifference; "I didn't think her worth so much trouble; she was glad, I suppose, to get rid of me, and, God knows, I was not sorry to be shot of her."

The vicissitudes to which sailors are subject train them to bear what are termed the ups and downs of life better than any other men in the world. They appear, when afloat, not only to leave all their cares on shore, but to forget the hardships incident to their condition. A remarkable instance of this was given by our captain, who told us that he went one day to see a tender, on board which there was a great number of men who had just been pressed, and who, though strictly confined in their floating prison, were, nevertheless, joining in the chorus of one of our patriotic airs, and singing with great glee the old song:—

"Who are so free as we sons of the waves?"

CHAPTER II.

Muscat.

"LAND from the mast-head!" "What does it look like?' "High land, sir, on the larboard bow, stretching away to the north-west." "Can you see land to starboard?" "No." "Then," says the captain, with some little swell, "we have just hit it; the watch is a good one; and three or four hours of this will bring us into Muscat." The prediction proved correct. Now, if I understood perspective and retrospective, how I would delight my readers by contrasting the barren rocky hills of Arabia, where not a trace of vegetable nature is to be found, with the shaded shores of Ceylon, and the dark forests that clothe the lofty mountains of Malabar! But I am not a picturesque traveller; suffice it therefore to say, the arid hills we were now contemplating protect, by almost encircling it, a cove, at the extremity of which is a small plain, crowded with high houses, which form the city of Muscat. This emporium to the trade of the Persian Gulf is defended by batteries which command its narrow entrance, as well as by fortifications that cover every part of the uneven and mis-shapen hills and crags around it.

Muscat is governed by a prince whose title is Imam, and whose authority, like that of many chiefs in Arabia, is more of a patriarchal than despotic character. Though he has large fleets, including some fine frigates, and a considerable army to garrison his possessions on the coast of Africa, the shores of Arabia, and the islands of the Persian Gulf, he must attend to the summons of any inhabitant of Muscat who calls him to a court of justice. Your sceptics who deny the existence of any just administration of power, except in the commonwealth of Europe, may call this a mere form. Be it so: yet the knowledge that such a form was observed went far, in my mind, to mark the character of this petty government. But it is the eye, the dis-

position, and the judgment of the observer, more than what is actually seen, that stamps the condition of distant nations with those who have to form their opinions at second-hand; and the generality of readers, who have their happiness grounded on a natural prejudice in favour of their own ways and usages, lean toward such as minister to their pride and patriotism, by throwing a dark shade on all they meet different from Old England, or some of those countries in its vicinity, for which their good climate, cheap viands, and well flavoured wines have created a predilection.

The eastern hemisphere continues to have a certain venerable air with old men from a belief that the star of knowledge first enlightened its horizon: children delight in it from its containing the enchanting tales of the "Thousand and one Nights;" ladies admire its flowered muslins, rich shawls, pure pearls, and brilliant diamonds; merchants view it as a source of commercial wealth; the naturalist, the botanist, and the geologist, search its plains, its forests, and its mountains, for unicorns, spikenard, splendid specimens of zeolite, and grand basaltic formations; the English soldier looks to its fields for a harvest of reputation; while pious missionaries sally forth with more than military zeal, to reclaim the millions of the East from their errors, and direct them in the path of life.

Almost all these, however different their objects, concur in one sentiment, that the rulers of the East are despots, and their subjects slaves; that the former are cruel, the latter degraded and miserable, and both equally ignorant.

I had seen the father of the present Imam of Muscat when I accompanied a former mission to Persia; we had been introduced to him on board the Ganjava, his flag ship, of a thousand tons burthen, and carrying forty guns. We found him, though surrounded with some state, very simply attired; he had a shawl rolled round his head as a turban, and the Arab cloak, which hung over his plain robes, was of white broad-cloth, no way ornamented; he wore no jewels, and had no arms, not even a dagger, about his person; his manner was plain and manly, and marked his active enterprising character. The eyes of his crew (Arabs, Nubians, and Abyssinians), who were upon or near the quarter-deck, though they wandered now and then among his

visitors, were usually fixed on their prince; but their countenance indicated affection, not fear; and I could not but observe that he never looked at or spoke to any of them but with kindness.

During this visit, while we were sitting under the awning spread over the deck, several captains of his largest vessels, who had just arrived from Bussorah, came on board. The Imam was in the cabin with the Envoy, and before he came out, I was pleased to see the hearty manner in which these commanders saluted and were received by almost all on board. "Salâm alicum!" (Peace be with you!) was heard from all, while every one who met a friend took his right hand, and, after shaking it, raised it as high as his breast. What appeared singular, was the extent of this cordial and familiar greeting; it was not limited by those rules which are found necessary in more civilised societies. The Arab sailor, however low his occupation, exhibited an ease and independence in addressing the commanders, which showed that, as far as the intercourse between man and man was concerned, he deemed himself his equal. I asked a person sitting near me, if this familiarity did not now and then interfere with discipline? "No," he answered; "the line is well understood, and in cases of deviation there is a severe punishment; for with us, Arabs, the right of addressing our superiors, as you have now seen, is our proudest privilege, and its loss, which would be the consequence of the abuse of it, would be deeply felt, both as a privation and a disgrace."

The above scene was interrupted by the opening of the cabin door, and every one fell into his place as the Imam came upon deck. He stood while the commanders, who had returned from their voyage, advanced in their turns, according to their rank, and, taking his extended right hand in both theirs, pressed it, at the same time bending their bodies in a low bow, after which they raised their right hand in salutation to their head, then placing it on their heart, retired backwards. The Imam, after this ceremony was ended, seated himself, desiring us and all his principal officers to do the same.

We had a dinner prepared on board, of which the whole party partook; and when we came away, I was struck, as we passed under the stern of the vessel, by seeing some of the Imam's ladies, among whom was his favourite wife, unveiled, looking at

us with eager curiosity. They appeared much pleased, which we imputed to the notice the Envoy had taken of the Imam's sons, two fine boys, each of whom was gratified with appropriate presents.

The view I had taken of the Imam's court—the intercourse we had with him, his sons, and chief officers—the security which I observed merchants and other inhabitants, both Mahomedan and Hindu, enjoying at Muscat, gave me a very pleasing impression of that place, and I had made a sketch of the manners and customs of the people, no way unfavourable. This I showed one day to a friend, who was a captain in the navy, who, rather to my surprise, burst into a fit of laughter, and said, he could show me a very opposite picture of the same scene. "There is an order from the Admiralty," said he, "that the officers of a man-of-war, when they visit a port little known, should describe the manners and customs of the inhabitants. I have a blunt fellow of a master, an excellent seaman, but who troubles himself very little with matters on shore. Curious to have his observations, and knowing that he had two or three times visited the town of Muscat, I insisted on his complying with orders, and filling up the column of his journal. He evaded this duty as long as he could: at last, in despair, he went to his cabin, and returning with his book, said, 'There, sir, I have obeyed orders, and you will find all I could write about these black fellows, and all they deserve.' I took the journal and read,

'Inhabitants of Muscat.

'As to manners they have none; and their customs are very beastly.'"

This picture of the good master will no doubt be deemed by many truer than mine; and travellers who limit their observations to the busy beach, crowded with slaves, covered with packages of dates, blackened with flies, and scented with putrid salt fish, will be certain to prefer this laconic description of this rude and dirty people; or, supposing them to enter the vile narrow streets of the town, and see (as they may) strings of slaves walking, with a man following and calling out their prices as he exhibits them in this ambulatory auction:—"Number one—handsome young man, five hundred piastres; number two—a little older, but very healthy and strong, four hundred piastres;" and so on

till he describes his whole string of unhappy bipeds:—who would not turn with indignation and disgust from such filth and abomination!

If, however, we have nerve enough to look a little farther into the scene which has been described, we shall find that the reason why houses are crowded upon each other, till cleanliness becomes impossible, is because men and their property are protected at this port against injustice and oppression; and our disgust at the effect will in a great degree be removed by contemplating the cause. Even with regard to the sale of slaves, of which Muscat is the great mart, though the mode of disposing of them appears to justify the master's designation of the inhabitants as "beastly in their customs," yet when we take a comparative view of the fate of the victims of this commerce, from the stain of which our own country is hardly yet purified, and which is still carried on, openly or clandestinely, by almost every power of civilised Europe, we shall be compelled to acknowledge the superior humanity of Asiatic nations.

The slave in eastern countries, after he is trained to service, attains the condition of a favoured domestic; his adoption of the religion of his master is usually the first step which conciliates the latter. Except at a few sea-ports, he is seldom put to hard labour. In Asia there are no fields tilled by slaves, no manufactories in which they are doomed to toil; their occupations are all of a domestic nature, and good behaviour is rewarded by kindness and confidence, which raises them in the community to which they belong. The term gholam, or slave, in Mahomedan countries, is not one of opprobrium, nor does it even convey the idea of a degraded condition. The Georgians, Nubians, and Abyssinians, and even the Seedee, or Caffree, as the woolly-headed Africans are called, are usually married, and their children, who are termed house-born,* become, in a manner, part of their master's family. They are deemed the most attached of his adherents: they often inherit a considerable portion of his wealth; and not unfrequently (with the exception of the woolly-headed Caffree) lose, by a marriage in his family, or by some other equally respectable connexion, all trace of their origin.

According to the Mahomedan law, the state of slavery is

* Khâna-zâdeh.

divided into two conditions—the perfect and absolute, or imperfect and privileged. Those who belong to the first class are, with all their property, at the disposal of their masters. The second, though they cannot, before emancipation, inherit or acquire property, have many privileges, and cannot be sold or transferred. A female, who has a child to her master, belongs to the privileged class; as does a slave to whom his master has promised his liberty, on the payment of a certain sum, or on his death.

The greatest encouragement is given in the Koran,* and by all commentaries on that volume, to the manumission of slaves. Mahomed has said, "Unto such of your slaves as desire a written instrument, allowing them to redeem themselves, on paying a certain sum, write one, if ye know good in them, and give them of the riches of God, which he hath given you."

It is in obedience to this precept that pious Mahomedans often grant small pieces of land to a slave, or teach him a profession, that he may, through industry and frugality, attain the means of paying for his freedom, at the same time that he acquires habits which render him worthy of the great gift. Mahomedans are also encouraged to manumit their slaves by the law, which gives them a title, as residuary heir, to any property which the person to whom they may have granted freedom dies possessed.

On one point the slaves in Mahomedan countries are on a footing with free females: they are only liable, for any crimes they commit, to suffer half the punishment to which a free man would be subject. This law proceeds on the ground of their not being supposed on a par, as to knowledge or social ties, with other parts of the community. The application, however, of this principle of justice to cases where the law awards death or amputation, has puzzled the wise Moullahs, or doctors, who have resorted to the usual remedy, of writing ponderous volumes upon the subject; but I do not learn that they have yet discovered a plan by which an offending woman or slave can be punished with the loss of half a life; or an operation be performed, which will leave them with a half-amputated limb.

To return to Muscat: I had visited it at all seasons; it was now winter, and the climate was pleasant; in summer, the heat

* Vide Sale's Koran, vol. ii, p. 186.

is intolerable. Shut out by the hills from every breeze, except that which blows directly into the narrow entrance of the cove, there is seldom a breath of air; and the reflection of the sun, from the bare rocks and white fortifications which overhang the town and harbour, produces a temperature, which is described by a Persian poet as giving to a panting sinner a lively anticipation of his future destiny!

The young Imam, Syed Sayed, was absent on an expedition; but I regretted this the less as I had seen his father, who was, in simplicity of manners, good sense, and courage, the equal of his deserving son.

Among the first who came on board, I was pleased to see my old friend, Mahomed Gholoum. Being a good seaman, he had, on the former mission, in the year 1800, acted as our pilot from Muscat to Ormus. He was now advanced to be a pilot of the state, being one of the principal ministers of the young Imam, of whose character he spoke in high praise. "His father," said he, "was a brave man; he was killed in battle; and if his son goes on exposing himself everywhere, he will be killed also. He will regret much not seeing the Envoy, of whose kindness to him when a boy he retains a grateful recollection; for he preserves with great care the model of a seventy-four gun ship, with which he was presented by him."

Mahomed Gholoum was not changed by his prosperity, but retained all the frankness and manliness of an Arab sailor. We had many old stories, and at one, in which he was a prominent actor, he laughed very heartily. He had wished to take our vessel, the Bombay frigate, to the southward of Ormus; but as we neared that island, the wind headed us, as the sailors call it, at the same time that it increased to a gale, and our pilot told the captain we had nothing left but to run for the harbour we desired to make, by steering between the island and the Persian shore. We did so; the weather became worse—it blew a hurricane; the channel, which is narrow, was missed, and we touched on a mud-bank, where the ship settled for a moment, and the waves dashed over her. The captain ordered more sail, to try and force her through the mud, exclaiming at the same time, "I would rather give a lac of rupees than lose the Company's ship." "Never mind the Company's ship," said a passenger, "so you

land us safe." The seaman in the chains kept heaving the lead, and calling "Quarter less three." "What is the use of your quarter less three," said an impatient landsman, "when the ship is aground?" "That's the captain's business, not mine," said the unconcerned Jack, and again he hove, and again he called "Quarter less three." At this moment my attention was drawn to my friend Mahomed Gholoum, who was appalled by an Irish officer's exclaiming, "I do not understand your vile lingo; but I will cut your throat, (and he sawed with his finger across his windpipe to make him comprehend what he meant,) I will cut your throat, you ignoramus, for drowning of gentlemen in this rascally sea."

As these scenes were passing, the press of sail which had been put upon our vessel forced her over the bank: a few minutes more saw us safe in the harbour of Ormus, and all our danger forgotten. Mahomed Gholoum, quite exhausted, had, soon after we anchored, fallen asleep on a couch in the captain's cabin; but he was dreaming of past events, and when I shook him, to make him rise to partake of supper, he started up, and with a wild look called out, "How many fathom have you?" We told him to take his seat, and we would teach him, Mahomedan as he was, to fathom a bowl.

Soon after our arrival at Muscat, we were visited by men of all nations and colours. I was principally attracted by the appearance and manners of some Arabs from the interior, who were brought on board by their countrymen to see an English ship of war. Their figures were light and elastic, their countenances expressed quickness and energy. The most remarkable of their features were their dark rolling eyes, which perhaps struck me more from their wandering rapidly from one object to another, glistening with wonder at all they saw. A good telescope happened to be placed so as to give a complete view of one of the farthest fortifications. I called an Arab to look through it, and he did so for about a minute, then gazed with the most eager attention at me, and, without saying a word, dashed over the ship's side. When the boat he was in got to a little distance, he exclaimed, "You are magicians, and I now see how you take towns; that thing (pointing to the telescope), be they ever so far off, brings them as near as you like." We were much amused

with his simplicity, but no arguments could prevail on him to return and receive such a lesson on optics as might dispel his delusion in supposing us to be adepts in the black art.

The Arabs at Muscat gave a luxuriant description of some beautiful valleys about twenty miles from that town; but the result of minute inquiry forced us to conclude that the green meadows and clear streams they described owed much of their value to their rarity, and that the title of Arabia the Happy is rather founded on the barrenness of the far greater part of this renowned land, than on any thing wonderful either in the climate or productions of the tract to which it is applied.

CHAPTER III.

The Persian Gulf and Abusheher.

When we had fairly entered the Persian Gulf I found myself on classic ground, where all the wonderful adventures of Sinbad the sailor were, what a genuine Yankee would call located. I sent for an Arabian servant called Khudâdâd, and asked him who were the inhabitants of the barren shore of Arabia that we saw. He answered, with apparent alarm—"They are of the sect of Wahâbees, and are called Jouassimee; but God preserve us from them, for they are monsters. Their occupation is piracy, and their delight murder; and to make it worse, they give you the most pious reasons for every villainy they commit. They abide by the letter of the sacred volume, rejecting all commentaries and traditions. If you are their captive, and offer all you possess to save your life, they say 'No! it is written in the Koran that it is unlawful to plunder the living, but we are not prohibited in that sacred work from stripping the dead;' so saying, they knock you on the head. But then," continued Khudâdâd, "that is not so much their fault, for they are descended from a Houl, or monster, and they act according to their nature."

I begged he would inform me about their descent. He seemed surprised at my ignorance, and said it was a story that he thought was known to every one in the world, but proceeded to comply with my request.

"An Arab fisherman," said he, "who lived in a village on the Persian Gulf, not far from Gombroon, being one day busy at his usual occupation, found his net so heavy that he could hardly drag it on shore. Exulting in his good fortune, he exerted all his strength: but judge of his astonishment, when, instead of a shoal of fish, he saw in his net an animal of the shape of a man, but covered with hair. He approached it with caution; but

finding it harmless, carried it to his house, where it soon became a favourite; for, though it could speak no language, and utter no sound except 'houl, houl,' (from whence it took its name,) it was extremely docile and intelligent; and the fisherman, who possessed some property, employed it to guard his flocks.

"It happened one day that a hundred Persian horsemen, clothed in complete armour, came from the interior, and began to drive away the sheep. The Houl, who was alone, and had no arms but a club, made signs for them to desist; but they only scoffed at his unnatural appearance, till he slew one or two who approached too near him. They now attacked him in a body; but his courage and strength were surpassed by his activity, and while all fell who came within his reach, he eluded every blow of his enemies; and they fled, after losing half their numbers.

"The fisherman and his neighbours, when they heard of the battle, hastened to the aid of the faithful Houl, whom they found in possession of the horses, clothes, and arms of the vanquished Persians. An Arab of the village, struck with his valour, and casting an eye of cupidity at the wealth he had acquired, offered him the hand of his daughter, who was very beautiful, and she, preferring good qualities to outward appearance, showed no reluctance to become the bride of this kind and gallant monster. Their marriage was celebrated with more pomp than was ever before known in the village; and the Houl, who was dressed in one of the richest suits of the Persians he had slain, and mounted on one of their finest horses, looked surprisingly well. He was quite beside himself with joy, playing such antics, and exhibiting such good humour, strength, and agility, that his bride, who had at first been pitied, became the envy of every fisherman's daughter. She would have been more so, could they have foreseen the fame to which she was destined. She had four sons, from whom are descended the four tribes of Ben Jouassim, Ben Ahmed, Ben Nasir, and Ben Saboohil, who are to this day known by the general name of Ben Houl, or the children of Houl. They are all fishermen, boatmen, and pirates, and live chiefly at sea, inheriting, it is believed, the amphibious nature of their common ancestor."

After this tale was concluded, I asked Khudâdâd what kind of men inhabited those high mountains which we saw rising on the

Persian shores of the gulf. Delighted at this second opportunity of showing his knowledge, he replied, "They also are robbers, but they are not so bad as the Jouassimee. They refer their first settlement in these mountains to the devil; but then they are the children of men, and their nature is not diabolical, though their deeds are sometimes very like it."

On questioning Khudâdâd further, I found he had the popular story taken from Firdousee,* and that he kept pretty near to his text; but I shall give it in his own words. "You have heard of Zohâk, prince of Arabia?" I said I had. "Well then," he continued, "you know he was a very wicked man. He conquered Jemsheed, king of Persia, who was in those days deemed the most glorious monarch on earth. After this great success Zohâk was tempted by the devil, who allured him, under the shape of a venerable old man, to kill his father, that he might become king of Arabia as well as Persia. In those days men lived on vegetable diet; but the devil, anxious to destroy as many of the human race as he could, tempted Zohâk with some new roasted eggs, and perceiving him to relish his food, proposed to cook him a dish of partridges and quails, with the flavour of which the Prince was so delighted that he bade his friend ask any favour he liked. The wily old man said all he wished was to kiss the shoulders of his beloved monarch. They were bared for that purpose; but no sooner had the infernal lips touched them than out sprang from each a ravenous serpent, and at the same time the venerable old man changed to his natural shape, and disappeared in a thunder-storm, exclaiming that human brains alone would satisfy the monsters he had created, and that their death would be followed by that of Zohâk.

"It fell out as the devil foretold: the serpents refused all other food, and, for a period, two victims were daily slain to satisfy them. Those charged with the preparation of this horrid repast, seeing the devil's design, determined on frustrating it; and while they paraded before Zohâk and his serpents the persons who were doomed to death, they substituted the brains of

* Firdousee is the first of the epic poets of Persia, and few countries can boast of a greater genius. His chief work, the Shâh-nâmeh, or Book of Kings, contains, mixed with allegory and fable, almost all the Persians know of their ancient history.

sheep, and sent their supposed human victims to the mountains of Kerman and Lauristan, where they increased, and became a great people, and their descendants still inhabit these hills. There can be no doubt," said Khudâdâd, gravely, "of the truth of what I have told you; for it is all written in a book, and a fine poem made upon it, which is called the Shâh-nâmeh, or Book of Kings."

Having acquired this correct information about the shores of the gulf, I landed at Abusheher,* a Persian sea-port, celebrated as the mart of chintzes and long-ells, of dates and asafœtida. We were met on the beach by the whole population of the town. What appeared to excite most admiration was the light company of His Majesty's 84th Regiment, whose uniform appearance caused no slight wonder. Struck with their similarity of look, one man exclaimed, "These fellows must all have had the same father and mother!" "That cannot be," said another, "for they must all have been born on the same day." "They are proper devils, I'll warrant them," said an old woman, who had been looking at them very attentively. They had now received the order to march; and the regularity with which their feet moved was a new subject of surprise. An old merchant, called Hajee Ismael, whose life had been spent amongst his accounts, and who delighted in everything that was regular, stood at a corner as they passed in files, and kept saying, as he noted them with his fingers, "correct,† correct, correct." Take it all in all, our landing seemed to give great pleasure to the men, women, and children of the port of Abusheher.

We had not been on shore a week before two events occurred, one of which showed what the Persians thought of us, and the other taught us what we should think of them.

Before the year 1800 no political mission from an European nation had visited the court of Persia for a century; but the English, though only known in that kingdom as merchants, had fame as soldiers, from the report of their deeds in India. An officer of one of the frigates, who had gone ashore to visit the

* Abusheher is the proper name, but it is better known to Europeans by the abbreviated appellation of Bushire.

† "Hissab," the Persian word, literally means an account; metaphorically, "correct, or according to a just account."

Envoy, when mounted on a spirited horse, afforded no small entertainment to the Persians by his bad horsemanship. The next day the man who supplied the ship with vegetables, and who spoke a little English, met him on board, and said, "Don't be ashamed, sir, nobody knows you: bad rider! I tell them, you, like all English, ride well, but that time they see you, very drunk!" We were much amused at this conception of our national character. The Persian thought it would have been a reproach for a man of a warlike nation not to ride well, but none for an European to get drunk.

The other occurrence was still more characteristic. The Envoy or Elchee,* as the Persians called him, had, among other plans for doing good, one for the introduction of potatoes. Among those who listened to him, and applauded his disinterested intentions to benefit Persia, was a fat, smooth-faced young merchant, who obtained a promise of a considerable quantity of potatoes for seed, having (according to his own report) rented a large piece of ground, that he might be an humble instrument in the hands of the British Representative for doing good. The latter, pleased with his zeal, honoured this excellent man with such particular attention, that, conceiving himself a prime favourite, he ventured one day to suggest that "As the season was too far advanced for the potatoe-garden that year, it would not be unworthy of the Elchee's wonted liberality to commute his intended present for a pair of pistols, or a piece of British broadcloth." This premature disclosure of the real object of this professed improver of the soil produced no little ridicule, in which his countrymen, who were jealous of the favour he had enjoyed, joined most heartily. He was known till the day of his death, which happened three years ago, by the name of Potatoes. It is satisfactory to add, that the plan for introducing this valuable root did not fail: they were found to flourish at Abusheher, where they are called "Malcolm's† plum," after the Elchee, who looks to the accident which gave his name to a useful vegetable as one of his best chances of enduring fame.

The English factory, which had long been at Gombroon, had

* Elchee means ambassador, or representative of a foreign nation.

† Alou, e, Malcolm.

been removed some years before to Abusheher. All the old servants had accompanied it, and one, of the name of Suffer, had recently died, of whom I was delighted to hear, from the best authority, an anecdote, which did credit to the kindness of our countrymen, while it showed that even in this soil, good usage will generate strong and lasting attachment. When poor Suffer, who had been fifty years a servant in the factory, was on his death-bed, the English doctor ordered him a glass of wine. He at first refused it, saying, "I cannot take it; it is forbidden in the Koran." But after a few moments he begged the doctor to give it him, saying, as he raised himself in his bed, "Give me the wine; for it is written in the same volume, that all you unbelievers will be excluded from Paradise; and the experience of fifty years teaches me to prefer your society in the other world, to any place unto which I can be advanced with my own countrymen." He died a few hours after this sally, which I was glad to observe proved of value to his son, a rough-looking lad named Derveish, who was introduced by the Resident to the Envoy, at the time the former told the story of the father's attachment. Derveish was taken into service, and I have watched his gradual advancement till he has become the proprietor of a large boat, which is the ne plus ultra of the ambition of an Abusheheree.

The natives of this place are almost all of Arab race, and fond of the sea; a propensity the more remarkable, as it is in such strong contrast with the disposition of the Persians, of whom all classes have an unconquerable antipathy to that element. But this is not the only characteristic distinction between these classes of men, who appear to agree in nothing but in dwelling in the same town. The Persians, who have been tempted by the hope of gain to exchange the fine climate of the elevated plains of the interior, for the sea-ports on the edge of the sultry desert, which forms the shores of the gulf, retain all the smooth pliant manners of their country; and they look with disgust on what they deem the rude barbarous habits of the Arabians, who are the great body of the inhabitants of this track, and who can scarcely be distinguished, either in look or sentiment, from their kindred on the opposite shore.

A remarkable instance of the difference of character, between the lower orders of these two classes, occurred one morning,

when the Envoy was preparing a match, to be run by a beautiful English greyhound called Venus, and a strong Arabian dog named Kessâb, or the Butcher. He was giving directions to his master of the chase, Hyder, and expressing his sanguine hopes of Venus's success: Mahomed Beg, a tall well-dressed Persian groom, assented to all his anticipations, saying, "What pretensions can that Arab dog have to run with the beautiful greyhound of the Elchee?"

Others joined in the same language, and the opinion appeared general, when an Arab, called Gherreeba,* whose pay was only four piastres † a month, whose chequered turban and cloth round his middle were not worth one, and whose occupation was sitting all day exposed to the sun, watering some grass screens that were placed against the door of the house to exclude the heat—darted up, and, with an eye of fire and the most marked energy, exclaimed, "By the all-powerful God, the Arab dog will triumph."‡

Gherreeba was for the moment the representative of the feelings of his country. The parasites around stood watching the Elchee, and were not a little mortified when they heard him applaud the honest warmth and manly independence of the poor Arab, who was invited to witness the trial. It ended, like most similar trials, in each party being convinced that their own favourite was, or ought to have been, the winner. The dogs ran as usual beautifully: Venus was by far the fleetest; but the chase, which was after a half-grown antelope, proved long, and the strength of the Butcher prevailed towards the close. It is however, justice to the deer species, while we are praising the canine, to add, that the antelope beat them both.

* Gherreeb means poor—this man was really so; but it is not unusual to meet Mahomedans, who are remarkable for their rank, pride, or wealth, with names of similar character, that have been given by their mothers in a spirit of religious humility.

† The value of a piastre is about twenty pence.

‡ Billâh il azeem yadhfar al Arab.

CHAPTER IV.

Camp at Abusheher—Horses—Abdulla Aga—Anecdote of Arab.

SOON after we arrived at Abusheher our camp looked like a fair for horses and mules. It was necessary to mount, not only the Elchee and his suite, but his escort of English and Indian cavalry, and all the servants, public and private; for in Persia nobody walks. To suit the different persons of our party, animals of different descriptions were wanted; from the coarse Persian galloway* to the Arabian of pure strain,† many of which are bred on the Persian shore, with as much attention to preserve the original blood, as imported from Arabia, as could be shown in the first race-studs in England.

Hyder, the Elchee's master of the chase, was the person who imparted knowledge to me on all subjects relating to Arabian horses. He would descant by the hour on the qualities of a colt that was yet untried, but which, he concluded, must possess all the perfections of its sire and dam, with whose histories, and that of their progenitors, he was well acquainted. Hyder had shares in five or six famous brood mares; and he told me a mare was sometimes divided amongst ten or twelve Arabs, which accounted for the groups of half-naked fellows whom I saw watching, with anxiety, the progress made by their managing partner in a bargain for one of the produce. They often displayed, on these occasions, no small violence of temper; and I have more than once observed a party leading off their ragged colt in a perfect fury, at the blood of Daghee or Shumehtee, or some renowned sire or grandsire, being depreciated by an inadequate offer, from an ignorant Indian or European.

The Arabs place still more value on their mares than on their

* Yaboo.

† *Regee Pak*, the term by which these high-bred animals are distinguished, means literally "pure veins."

horses; but even the latter are sometimes esteemed beyond all price. When the Envoy, returning from his former mission, was encamped near Bagdad, an Arab rode a bright bay horse, of extraordinary shape and beauty, before his tent, till he attracted his notice. On being asked if he would sell him—"What will you give me?" said he. "It depends upon his age; I suppose he is past five?" "Guess again," was the reply. "Four?" "Look at his mouth," said the Arab, with a smile. On examination he was found rising three; this, from his size and perfect symmetry, greatly enhanced his value. The Envoy said, "I will give you fifty tomans."* "A little more, if you please," said the fellow, apparently entertained. "Eighty! a hundred!" He shook his head and smiled. The offer came at last to two hundred tomans! "Well," said the Arab, seemingly quite satisfied, "you need not tempt me any farther—it is of no use; you are a fine Elchee; you have fine horses, camels, and mules, and I am told you have loads of silver and gold: now," added he, "you want my colt, but you shall not have him for all you have got." So saying he rode off to the desert, whence he had come, and where he, no doubt, amused his brethren with an account of what had passed between him and the European Envoy.

Inquiry was made of some officers of the Pasha of Bagdad respecting this young man; they did not know him, but conjectured that, notwithstanding his homely appearance, he was the son or brother of a chief, or perhaps himself the head of a family; and such Arabs, they said, when in comparative affluence, no money could bribe to sell a horse like the one described.

I was one day relating the above story to Abdulla Aga, the former governor of Bussorah, who was at Abusheher, having been obliged to fly from Turkey. He told me that, when in authority, he several times had great trouble in adjusting disputes among Arab tribes regarding a horse or mare which had been carried off by one of them from another; not on account of the value of the animals, that having been often offered ten-fold, but from jealousy of their neighbour's becoming possessed of a breed of horses which they desired to remain exclusively in their own tribe. An Arab Shaikh or chief, he told me, who lived within

* A toman is a nominal coin, nearly the value of a pound sterling.

fifty miles of Bussorah, had a favourite breed of horses. He lost one of his best mares, and could not for a long time discover whether she was stolen or had strayed. Some time afterwards, a young man of a different tribe, who had long wished to marry his daughter, but had always been rejected by the Shaikh, obtained the lady's consent and eloped with her. The Shaikh and his followers pursued; but the lover and his mistress, mounted on the same horse, made a wonderful march, and escaped. The old chief swore that the fellow was either mounted upon the devil or the favourite mare he had lost. After his return he found, on inquiry, the latter was the case; that the lover was the thief of his mare as well as of his daughter, and that he had stolen the one for the purpose of carrying off the other. He was quite gratified to think he had not been beaten by a horse of another breed, and was easily reconciled to the young man, in order that he might recover the mare, which appeared an object about which he was more solicitous than his daughter.

Abdulla Aga is a man in whose company I take great pleasure. His understanding is vigorous and strong, and he has sufficient knowledge of the English character to speak his sentiments with freedom and confidence. I shall give the substance of a conversation I had with him about two weeks after my arrival, regarding the present condition of Persia and Turkey, with the resources and character of both which states he is intimately acquainted. Speaking of Turkey, he said he had no idea of its having the power to resist the slightest attack; and he believed, if left alone, it would soon fall to pieces of itself.—"I am myself a Turk, and know my countrymen well: from the Grand Signior to the lowest peasant in the empire, they are alike devoid of public virtue and patriotism; and that spirit of religion, which has long been the only bond of union that has kept this unwieldy state together, is every day becoming fainter; and while the Wahâbees are making converts of the inhabitants of Arabia and Syria, the provinces of Turkey in Europe are relaxing from their religious zeal, and becoming every day more ripe for the rule of those Christian nations, under whose power they must soon fall."

I could not help saying, I thought he drew an overcharged picture of the weak and distracted state of his country. "You

will soon see," he said, "whether I am right or wrong. No man, whatever may be his rank, looks beyond his beard in Turkey: if he can find any expedient that gives him a prospect of its growing grey in quiet, he is content; and where all are so decidedly selfish in their views, who is to provide for the safety of the state, to guard which there must be some common sentiment of union?"

"What think you of Persia?" I asked. "Why, twenty times worse than of Turkey," replied he; "because they are to the full as devoid of every public principle, and much more ignorant. Believe me, you will soon be satisfied that they deserve this character. Can there be a doubt, at the present moment, how they ought to act between you and the French? And yet you will be able to settle nothing with them that is in the least satisfactory, without heavy bribes or harsh measures. The latter," he added, "will be the wisest in the present instance; for to feed their cupidity is only to whet their appetite, and to encourage them in a course that will, in its result, prove as injurious to these short-sighted fools as to the interests of the English government."

"The Elchee's intentions are so friendly," I observed in reply, "and his wishes so correspond with their true interests, that they must, I think, meet them, when all the advantages are explained." "Before you anticipate success from such an explanation, you should be certain that those to whom you speak have sense to comprehend you, which the Persians certainly have not. They think of nothing at this moment but the Russians, with whom they have discovered they are not able to contend. The French pretend to relieve them from this formidable danger, which they have not themselves the courage to face; and they cling to this promise without ever considering how far those who make it have the means of performing it. They neither understand the nature or distance of the resources of England or France, and are consequently incapable of forming a correct idea of the comparative power which those states possess of aiding or injuring them. They know that Bombay is within a month's sail, Madras six weeks, and Calcutta two months; and they believe you have some ships at these places; but even of these they have no clear idea; and as to Europe, they are as ignorant as an Abyssinian."

"Assuredly," said I, "you underrate their knowledge." "I do not," said Abdulla; "they are worse than I have painted them, and their ignorance is so fortified by pride, that there is no hope of their amendment. Why (said he, with animation), what can you expect from men who are ignorant of the surface of the globe? There," said he, pointing to a rude Turkish book on geography, which lay near him, and appeared to be a translation from an old geographical grammar—"there is the only source of my knowledge, which does not place me on a par with one of your schoolboys of twelve years of age; and yet I am a wonder among these fools, who are astonished at the extent of my information in this branch of science."

Though I think it is a very deep and wise observation of that arch politician Machiavel, that the report of a man who has fled his country should not be implicitly trusted, as there must be a bias in his mind to depreciate what he has been obliged to abandon: still there is much truth in the picture which Abdulla drew of Turkey, and his description of the Persians was not greatly exaggerated. The knowledge of that nation is limited to what they see before them, and their ideas of other States are very indistinct and confused, and consequently liable to frequent fluctuations and changes. All ranks in Persia are brought up to admire show and parade; and they are more likely to act from the dictates of imagination and vanity, than of reason and judgment. Their character was well drawn by Mahomed Nubbee Khan, the late ambassador to India. "If you wish my countrymen to understand you, speak to their eyes, not their ears."

My conversation with Abdulla Aga was interrupted by the arrival of a medical gentleman, who had long resided at Abusheher, and who was not more remarkable for skill in his profession than a kindness of heart, which led him to devote his time to the poor inhabitants of the country who sought his aid. He had just been setting the broken leg of an Arab, of whom he gave us a very characteristic anecdote.

"The patient," the doctor said, "complained more of the accident which had befallen him than I thought becoming in one of his tribe. This I remarked to him, and his answer was truly amusing. 'Do not think, doctor, I should have uttered one word of complaint if my own high-bred colt, in a playful

kick, had broke both my legs; but to have a bone broken by a brute of a jackass is too bad, and I will complain.'"

This distinction of feeling, as to the mode in which bones are broken, is not confined to the Arabs. I once met an artillery-man, after an action in India, with his arm shattered, who was loudly lamenting his bad fortune. I pointed, in an upbraiding manner, to some fine fellows on the ground, whose luck had been worse. "It is not the wound, sir," he retorted, in a passion, "of which I complain: had I lost a limb by a cannon-ball, I should not have said a word; but to lose one by a rascally rocket would make any one mad!"


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CHAPTER V.

Hunting and Hawking—Entertainment of the Shaikh—Tollemache—Mirage —Nadir Shah and Turkish Ambassador.

We were kept several weeks at Abusheher; and among other amusements by which we beguiled the tedium of our sojourn at this dull sea-port, were those of hunting and hawking; which, according to the Nimrods of our party, are nowhere found in greater perfection: but as the mode of killing the game differs essentially from that of other countries, I shall describe it, that such sportsmen as can read may judge of its merits.

The huntsmen proceed to a large plain, or rather desert, near the sea-side: they have hawks and greyhounds; the former carried in the usual manner, on the hand of the huntsman; the latter led in a leash by a horseman, generally the same who carries the hawk. When the antelope is seen, they endeavour to get as near as possible; but the animal, the moment it observes them, goes off at a rate that seems swifter than the wind; the horsemen are instantly at full speed, having slipped the dogs. If it is a single deer, they at the time fly the hawks; but if a herd, they wait till the dogs have fixed on a particular antelope. The hawks, skimming along near the ground, soon reach the deer, at whose head they pounce in succession, and sometimes with a violence that knocks it over. At all events, they confuse the animal so much as to stop its speed in such a degree that the dogs can come up; and in an instant men, horses, dogs, and hawks, surround the unfortunate deer, against which their united efforts have been combined. The part of the chase that surprised me most was the extraordinary combination of the hawks and the dogs, which throughout seemed to look to each other for aid. This, I was told, was the result of long and skilful training.

The antelope is supposed to be the fleetest quadruped on earth,

and the rapidity of the first burst of the chase I have described is astonishing. The run seldom exceeds three or four miles, and often is not half so much. A fawn is an easy victory; the doe often runs a good chase, and the buck is seldom taken. The Arabs are, indeed, afraid to fly their hawks at the latter, as these fine birds, in pouncing, frequently impale themselves on its sharp horns.

The hawks used in this sport are of a species that I have never seen in any other country. This breed, which is called Cherkh, is not large, but of great beauty and symmetry.

Another mode of running down the antelope is practised here, and still more in the interior of Persia. Persons of the highest rank lead their own greyhounds in a long silken leash, which passes through the collar, and is ready to slip the moment the huntsman chooses. The well-trained dog goes alongside the horse, and keeps clear of him when at full speed, and in all kinds of country. When a herd of antelopes is seen, a consultation is held, and the most experienced determine the point towards which they are to be driven. The field (as an English sportsman would term it) then disperse, and while some drive the herd in the desired direction, those with the dogs take their post on the same line, at the distance of about a mile from each other; one of the worst dogs is then slipped at the herd, and from the moment he singles out an antelope the whole body are in motion. The object of the horsemen who have greyhounds is to intercept its course, and to slip fresh dogs, in succession, at the fatigued animal. In rare instances the second dog kills. It is generally the third or fourth; and even these, when the deer is strong, and the ground favourable, often fail. This sport, which is very exhilarating, was the delight of the late King of Persia, Aga Mahomed Khan, whose taste is inherited by the present Sovereign.

The novelty of these amusements interested me, and I was pleased, on accompanying a party to a village, about twenty miles from Abusheher, to see a species of hawking, peculiar, I believe, to the sandy plains of Persia, on which the Hubara,* a

* The Hubara usually weighs from seven to eleven pounds. On its head is a tuft of black and white feathers; the back of the head and neck are spotted black; the side of the head and throat are white, as well as the

noble species of bustard is found on almost bare plains, where it has no shelter but a small shrub called geetuck. When we went in quest of them we had a party of about twenty, all well mounted. Two kinds of hawks are necessary for this sport; the first, the cherkh (the same which is flown at the antelope), attacks them on the ground, but will not follow them on the wing; for this reason, the Bhyree, a hawk well known in India, is flown the moment the hubara rises.

As we rode along in an extended line, the men who carried the cherkhs every now and then unhooded and held them up, that they might look over the plain. The first hubara we found afforded us a proof the astonishing quickness of sight of one of the hawks; he fluttered to be loose, and the man who held him gave a whoop, as he threw him off his hand, and set off at full speed. We all did the same. At first we only saw our hawk skimming over the plain, but soon perceived, at a distance of more than a mile the beautiful speckled hubara, with his head erect, and wings outspread, running forward to meet his adversary. The cherkh made several unsuccessful pounces, which were either evaded or repelled by the beak or wings of the hubara, which at last found an opportunity of rising, when a bhyree was instantly flown, and the whole party were again at full gallop. We had a flight of more than a mile, when the hubara alighted, and was killed by another cherkh, who attacked him on the ground. This bird weighed ten pounds. We killed several others, but were not always successful, having seen our hawks twice completely beaten during the two days we followed this fine sport.

The inhabitants of the country over which we hunted are all Arabs. They live, like their brethren in other parts, almost entirely on camels' milk and dates. Their care appears limited to the preservation of the animal and the propagation of the tree, which yield what they account the best of this world's luxuries; and these not only furnish this lively race of men with food, but with almost all the metaphors in which their language abounds.

under part of the body; the breast is slate-coloured; the feathers of the wing are greenish brown, speckled with black; the bill of a very dark grey; and on each side of the neck is a large and handsome tuft of feathers, black and white alternately.

Of this we had an amusing instance: amongst others who accompanied the Elchee on this sporting expedition was a young officer, who measured six feet seven inches: he, like others, had lain down to take an hour's repose, between our morning and evening hunt. An old Arab who was desired to awake him, smiling, said to his servant, "Entreat your date-tree to rise." We had a hearty laugh at our friend, who was not at first quite reconciled to this comparison of his commanding stature to the pride of the desert.

If we were amused by the field-diversions of the Persians and Arabs, they were equally so with our mode of hunting. The Elchee had brought a few couples of English fox-hounds, intending them as a present to the heir-apparent, Abbas Meerza. With this small pack we had several excellent runs. One morning we killed a fox, after a very hard chase; and while the rest of the party were exulting in their success, cutting off poor reynard's brush, praising the hounds, adding some two feet to a wall their horses had cleared, laughing at those who had got tumbles, and recounting many a hair-breadth escape, I was entertained by listening to an Arab peasant, who, with animated gestures, was narrating to a group of his countrymen all he had seen of this noble hunt. "There went the fox," said he, pointing with a crooked stick to a clump of date-trees; "there he went at a great rate; I hallooed, and hallooed, but nobody heard me, and I thought he must get away; but when he was quite out of sight, up came a large spotted dog, and then another and another; they all had their noses on the ground, and gave tongue, whow, whow, whow, so loud that I was frightened:—away went these devils, who soon found the poor animal; after them galloped the Faringees*, shouting and trying to make a noise louder than the dogs: no wonder they killed the fox among them; but it is certainly fine sport. Our Shaikh has no dogs like these." This last remark was assented to by all present, and the possession of a breed of dogs, which their Shaikh had not, added not a little, in the eyes of those peasants, to the character of the mission.

We were now busy preparing to leave Abusheher. Before

* Faringee, which is a corruption of Frank, is the name given to an European over all Asia.

we took our departure, the Shaikh gave the Elchee and his suite an entertainment. Among other subjects of conversation at this feast, the name of the Derveish Abdulla, who had some years before visited that port, and sailed for India, was mentioned. I smiled as they related stories of his sanctity and learning, and still more as I found different parties, a Turk, a Persian, and an Arab, contending for the honour their country derived from his belonging to it. "You have only to hear him speak, and repeat poetry," said Hajee Ismael, "to be certain he is a Persian." "It is his reecital of passages of the Koran that convinces me he is an Arab," said the Shaikh. "You may say what you like," said Abdulla Aga, "but no man but a native of Turkey ever spoke Turkish like Derveish Abdulla."

At this part of the conversation I put in my word, and said, "Really, gentlemen, you are all mistaken; the far-famed Derveish you mention is a Frenchman, his real name is Tollemache, and I know him well." It was not a mere smile of incredulity with which they listened. The remark I had made, while it received not the least credit, excited unpleasant feelings, and a friend near me whispered that it was better to abstain from the subject.

The following is a short history of this remarkable individual, who has attained such a perfection in the languages and manners of the natives of Asia as to deceive the most learned.

Mons. Tollemache, the son of a Dragoman at Constantinople, was many years ago recommended to Mr. Warren Hastings, who patronised him; but a quarrel, in which he was involved, at Calcutta, led to his leaving that city and going to the north-western part of India, from whence he went into the countries of Cabool, Khorassan, and Persia, and was lost trace of by his European friends for twelve years. His latter name in Persia was the Derveish Abdulla, under which he became renowned for his piety and learning. He had officiated as first reader of prayers* before the late King, who honoured him with his favour. He came to Abusheher, from whence he went to Surat, where, after his overtures of service to the English government had been refused, he proceeded to the Isle of France, and is mentioned in Lord Wellesley's notes as the person employed

* Paish Namaz.

there with Tippoo Sultan's Ambassadors. On proceeding afterwards to the Red Sea he was made prisoner by Admiral Blanket, and sent to Bombay, where I became acquainted with him at the house of a friend with whom he resided.

The memory of Tollemache was stored with rare Persian poems and songs: his conversation was, from his various knowledge, very entertaining. Of his power to assume any Asiatic character, the following anecdote will suffice. He had been dilating on his success in deceiving natives of the countries through which he passed, and observed me to be rather incredulous. I had not remarked his leaving the room some minutes before I did, but, when driving out of the gate, I was so annoyed by the importunities of a Mahomedan mendicant, who was almost naked, that I abused him, and threatened to use my whip, if he did not desist, when the fellow burst into a fit of laughter, and asked me if I so soon forgot my acquaintances?" I could hardly credit my eyes and ears on recognising Tollemache; and the recollection of this occurrence prevented me saying more to my friends at the Shaikh's party, whom I left in the belief that the holy Abdulla was a saint upon earth.

The first march from Abusheher we had to pass over a desert plain of considerable extent, on which I amused myself by watching narrowly the various changes, as we were near or remote from it, of that singular vapour, called by the French Mirage, and by the Arabs and Persians Sirab.

The influence of this vapour in changing the figure of objects is very extraordinary; it sometimes gives to those seen through it the most fantastical shapes; and, as a general effect, I think it always appears to elevate and make objects seem much taller than they really are. A man, for instance, seen through it at the distance of a mile and a half upon the level plain appears to be almost as tall as a date tree.

Its resemblance to water is complete, and justifies all the metaphors of poets, and their tales of thirsty and deluded travellers.

The most singular quality of this vapour is its power of reflection. When a near observer is a little elevated, as on horseback, he will see trees and other objects reflected as from the surface of a lake. The vapour, when seen at a distance of six or seven miles, appears to lie upon the earth like an opaque mass; and it

certainly does not rise many feet above the ground, for I observed, that while the lower part of the town of Abusheher was hid from the view, some of the more elevated buildings, and the tops of a few date trees, were distinctly visible.

Among the presents for his majesty of Persia were two light field-pieces, to which were attached a select detachment of horse-artillery. Great care was taken to equip this party in the best style; and as they had a difficult march to perform, they were sent in advance, under the tall officer who has been already mentioned. Our third stage to Dalkhee was so rough and stony, that we were alarmed lest we should hear bad accounts of their progress; but our fears were all dissipated by the reports of the villagers.

"Their fathers," they said "had never seen such guns, nor such a young man as their officer." "Why," said an old Moullah, "I have often seen our guns; they move only a few yards in an hour, though dragged by a hundred oxen and a hundred men, and at every step the air resounds with 'Ya Allah! ya Allah!' (O God! O God!) my countrymen being obliged to invoke Heaven to help them in their heavy work; but your young officer (who is himself a wonder in size) jumps upon his horse and cries 'tap, tap,' and away trot the guns like feathers. We all came to look at him and his guns, and stared till we were tired; and every one expressed his admiration. As for me, I have commenced a poem upon the party." The Elchee, who had been laughing, looked grave at this threat of a kesseda or ode; for he is already overwhelmed with such compositions: every man in Persia who can make two lines rhyme in praise of the Mission being anxious to change, so soon as possible, the product of his imagination into solid piastres.

All our baggage and camp equipage was carried upon mules; and no country can boast of finer animals of this description than Persia. They carry heavy burdens, and travel great distances, at a rate of better than four miles an hour. They go in strings; and I was amused to see them, when at the end of the march and unloaded, tied in circles, going after each other, at their usual pace, till they were cool.

The Khater-bashee, or master of the mules, is a person of the greatest importance. This class of men are generally known by

the strength of their frame, and, above all, of their lungs, which are continually exercised in consigning man and beast to every species of torment and evil, both in this world and the next. On the first mission to Persia we had a mule-driver called Hajee Hashem, who, from his strength and temper, was the terror of caravans. This man, on our second day's march, anxious to unload his mules, refused to pay any attention to the injunctions of Peter, the Elchee's steward, and carelessly cast a box containing glass upon some loose stones, at the hazard of breaking its contents. Peter, who had been educated on board a man-of-war, and was a very stout fellow, irritated beyond bearing at this treatment of his pantry ware, seized Hajee by the waist, and before he had time to make an effort, cast him over the animal he had so rudely unloaded; and while the astonished mule-driver lay sprawling, and not yet knowing whether his bones were broken, Peter, calling his interpreter, a Persian servant, who had learned a little English at Bombay—"Tell that fellow," he said, in a voice which showed his rage was only half expended, "it is lucky for him that his bones are not so brittle as my glass, of which he will take better care another time."

Having witnessed this scene, I anticipated a complaint to the Elchee; but what was my surprise to learn, that Hajee Hashem had petitioned to be exclusively attached, with his mules, to Peter's department! He was so; they continued always the best of friends; and no disappointment could be greater than that of the old Hajee, when he came to furnish cattle for the second mission, at finding his ally Peter was not of the party.

The ground of Hajee Hashem's attachment to his friend may be deemed extraordinary; but had the master muleteer been a historian, he might have pleaded high authority in his own country, for valuing another for superiority in the rough qualities in which he himself excelled.

The emperor of Constantinople, Mahmood the Fifth, the great rival of Nadir Shah, desiring to humble the vanity of that conqueror, and knowing he valued himself more on his superior bodily power and stentorian voice that on any other qualities, selected, as an Envoy to Persia, a porter, of extraordinary personal strength and most powerful lungs.

The Envoy had merely charge of a letter, which he was told

to deliver in person to the king, to require an answer, and return. The fame of this remarkable diplomatist preceded him; and Nadir was advised not to receive him, as his deputation was deemed an insult. But curiosity overcame all other considerations, and he was introduced one day that there was a very full court.

When the Turk approached the throne, Nadir, assuming his fiercest look, and exerting his voice to the utmost, said, "What do you desire of me?" Almost all started, and the hall vibrated to the sound; but the Envoy, with an undaunted air, and in a voice of thunder which made Nadir's appear like the treble of a child, exclaimed, "Take that letter, and give me an answer, that I may return to my master."

The court were in amazement; all eyes were turned on Nadir, whose frowning countenance gradually relaxed into a smile, and, turning to his courtiers, he said, "After all, the fellow certainly has merit." He was outdone, but he could not help, like Hajee Hashem, respecting in another the qualities he valued in himself.

Nadir is stated to have retorted the intended insult, by saying to the Envoy, when he gave him leave to depart, "Tell Mahmood I am glad to find he has one man in his dominions, and has had the good sense to send him here, that we may be satisfied of the fact."

CHAPTER VI.

Elchee's Lectures—Mehmandar's Journal—Arab Nurse—Blue-beard—Persian Ceremony—King's Picture.

THE Elchee, from the moment we landed in Persia, has been lecturing us on the importance of the conduct of every individual, as connected with a just impression of the national character. "These Persians," said he to us one day, "have no knowledge beyond their country; they understand no language but their own and Arabic; and though all the better classes read, the books to which they have access afford them little if any information, except of Asia. Europe, in fact, is only known by name, and by general and confused accounts of the fame of its nations, and their comparative greatness. They are, however," he added, "a very keen and observing people, and full of curiosity. In the absence of books, they will peruse us, and from what they hear and see, form their opinion of our country. Let us take care, therefore, that nothing is found in the page but what is for the honour of England; and believe me that, with such a people, more depends upon personal impressions than treaties."

With these sentiments, every word and act was shaped by him, and, so far as he could command and influence them, by others, to raise the English character. It was not enough that we were to give an example of all kinds of good qualities, but we were to be active and capable of fatigue, to show the Persians we were soldiers. The Envoy or Elchee, as they called him, happened to have a robust form, and a passion for shooting and hunting. It was, therefore, nothing more than an amusement to him to ride fifty or sixty miles of a morning, that he might surpass his Mehmandar or entertainer in his own line, but it was far otherwise to many of his suite. I did not like it; and a near relation of his, who was rather weak, and, like me, of sedentary habits, used to inveigh bitterly against these "political rides," as he scoffingly

termed them. There was, however, some sense in the Elchee's proceedings, as I discovered, when an intimacy with our old Mehmandar, Mahomed Sheriff Khan, a Burgashattee,* led to his showing me a journal he had written for the information of the court by whom he was deputed, in order to enable them to judge, by the aid of his observations, what kind of a person and nation they had to deal with. I shall transcribe the passage, which was literally as follows:—

"The Elchee and the English gentlemen with him, rise at dawn of day; they mount their horses and ride for two or three hours, when they come home and breakfast. From that time till four o'clock, when they dine, the Elchee is either looking at horses, conversing, reading, or writing; he never lies down, and, if he has nothing else to do, he walks backwards and forwards before his tent-door, or within it. He sits but a short time at dinner, mounts his horse again in the evening, and when returned from his ride, takes tea, after which he converses, or plays at cards till ten o'clock, when he retires to rest; and next day pursues nearly the same course.

"What I chiefly remark is, that neither he nor any of the gentlemen sleep during the day, nor do they ever, when the weather is warm, recline upon carpets as we do. They are certainly very restless persons; but when it is considered that these habits cause their employing so much more time every day in business, and in acquiring knowledge, than his Majesty's subjects, it is evident that at the end of a year they must have some advantage. I can understand, from what I see, better than I could before, how this extraordinary people conquered India. My office is very fatiguing, for the Elchee, though a good-natured man, has no love of quiet, and it is my duty to be delighted with all he does, and to attend him on all occasions."

This journal was written upon observations made before we left Abusheher. The poor old Mehmandar was compelled, soon after we marched, to slack in his constant attendance; for, as the Elchee's duty and inclination coincided, he was seldom satisfied with a stage of twenty or thirty miles, but usually went out in the evening of the same day to hunt, which, no doubt,

* Burgashattee is the name of a small Turkish tribe, of which this old nobleman was chief.

made the desired impression, and led the Persians in his suite to think, if the English, in very sport, so harassed their friends, what would become of their enemies?

My friend, Mahomed Sheriff Khan, was, as appears from his journal, a keen observer. He had the reputation of being a good soldier; but his distinguishing feature was pride in his condition as the chief of a tribe, and as representing, in his person, a portion of the authority of the King of Kings! This pride, however, which often flamed forth in real or assumed rage, was much regulated in its action by a regard for his own interests. He was always civil to the Elchee, and those with him, but to all upon whom his office gave him claims his demeanour was haughty and overbearing, till soothed by concession or bribes. I met the Mehmandar one morning, with a man leading a beautiful Arab colt, to which he pointed, saying, "That old scoundrel, Shaikh Nasser (Governor of Abusheher), had very nearly deprived me of that animal." "What!" said I, "could he venture to take him from you?" "No," said he; "the horse was his; but he had concealed him so carefully that I was near going away without getting him. I heard of him before I left Shiraz, and have been on the search ever since I came to Abusheher. I have just found him, hidden in an inner room, covered with dirt: and then to hear how the old fool whined about this colt of his favourite Daghee,* as he called him. He meant him, he said, to mount his son, a puny wretch, who was standing by, entreating me to listen to his father's prayer, and not to take away their only favourite; to save which, they offered several useless animals and some money. But I laughed out loud," concluded Mahomed Sheriff Khan, stroking his grizzly beard, "and said, they knew little of an old wolf like me, if they thought I was to be moved by their bleating, or tricked by their cunning. 'Go,' said I to the old Shaikh, 'and build a boat for that hopeful heir of yours; it will befit him better than a horse like this, which is only suited for a son of mine to ride upon.'"

I soon afterwards saw old Shaikh Nasser moving slowly along, muttering his usual phrase, "There 's no harm done:† Persian

* A celebrated stud-horse of Shaikh Nasser.

† *Aibee na dared*, which is literally translated in the text, was a phrase used by this old chief on every occasion.

scoundrels, Arab fools, all will go to hell together! God is just!—Well, well, there 's no harm done." I spoke to him—he took no notice, but went to his usual seat to superintend some carpenters, who were building a vessel which had been on the stocks about seventy years; there his smothered passion found vent in the most virulent abuse of all his tribe who approached him. When I spoke to him some time afterwards, he seemed in better humour. "This ship," said he, pointing to the ribs of the rude vessel, "will be finished some day or other, and she will hold us all: there is no harm done."

Mahomed Sheriff Khan used to laugh at his own habits, which he deemed less personal than belonging to his condition. One day, when riding through the streets, he observed me looking significantly at his Turkuman horse stretching his long neck to seize some greens, which a man was carrying in a basket on his head—"He has learnt it,"* said my friend, with a smile.

When I looked on the desert arid plains which lie between Abusheher and the mountains, and saw the ignorant, half-naked, swarthy men and women broiling under a burning sun, with hardly any food but dates, my bosom swelled with pity for their condition, and I felt the dignity of the human species degraded by their contented looks. "Surely," said I to Khojah Arratoon, an Armenian (known in the mission by the name of Blue-beard),† "these people cannot be so foolish as to be happy in this miserable and uninstructed state. They appear a lively, intelligent race—can they be insensible to their comparatively wretched condition? Do they not hear of other countries? have they no envy, no desire for improvement?" The good old Armenian smiled, and said, "No; they are a very happy race of people, and so far from envying the condition of others, they pity them. But," added he, seeing my surprise, "I will give you an anecdote which will explain the ground of this feeling.

"Some time since, an Arab woman, an inhabitant of Abusheher, went to England‡ with the children of a Mr. Beauman.

* *Amookhta ast.*

† The nick-name of Blue-beard was given by some of the young men of our party to our Treasurer, Khojah Arratoon, from that colour being one day predominant in the dye he had used to ornament his beard. This excellent man is now no more.

‡ This story has been told by Sir John Malcolm, in his history, in illus-

She remained in your country four years. When she returned, all gathered round her to gratify their curiosity about England. 'What did you find there? is it a fine country? are the people rich? are they happy?' She answered, 'The country was like a garden; the people were rich, had fine clothes, fine houses, fine horses, fine carriages, and were said to be very wise and happy.' Her audience were filled with envy of the English, and a gloom spread over them, which showed discontent at their own condition. They were departing with this sentiment, when the woman happened to say, 'England certainly wants one thing.' 'What is that?' said the Arabs eagerly. 'There is not a single date tree in the whole country!' 'Are you sure?' was the general exclamation. 'Positive,' said the old nurse; 'I looked for nothing else all the time I was there, but I looked in vain.' This information produced an instantaneous change of feeling among the Arabs: it was pity, not envy, that now filled their breasts; and they went away, wondering how men could live in a country where there were no date trees!"

This anecdote was told me as I was jogging on the road, alongside my friend Blue-beard, on our first march from Abusheher. I rode the remainder of the way (ten good miles) without speaking a word, but pondering on the seeming contradiction between the wisdom of Providence and the wisdom of man. I even went so far as to doubt the soundness of many admirable speeches and some able pamphlets I had read, regarding the rapid diffusion of knowledge. I changed to a calculating mood, and began to think it was not quite honest, even admitting it was wise, to take away what men possessed, of content and happiness, until you could give them an equal or greater amount of the same articles.

Before leaving Abusheher we had received many proofs of the favour of the Prince Regent of Shiraz. Soon after our arrival at that place, a favourite officer of his guards brought a present of twelve mule loads of fruit. When this young man came to pay his respects to the Elchee, Khojah Arratoon desired

tration of some of his facts or opinions; but he has taken this, and many other equally good things, from me, without ever acknowledging them; I shall, therefore, stand on no ceremony when it suits my purpose to reclaim my property.

to withdraw. When asked the reason: "Why," said he, "the person who is deputed by the Prince is a Georgian, the son of my next door neighbour in Teflis. When Aga Mahomed Khan plundered that city, in 1797, he was made a prisoner, with twenty or thirty thousand young persons of both sexes; and having since been compelled to become a Mahomedan, and now enjoying high rank, he may be embarrassed at seeing me." The Envoy said, "It does not signify; you are my Treasurer, and must be present at the visit of ceremony: depend upon it he will not notice you." It was as predicted; the bearer of the present, a very handsome young man, superbly dressed, and of finished manners, appeared to have no knowledge of Arratoon, though his eye rested on him once or twice. When the visit was over, the good Armenian could not contain himself: "The vile Mahomedan wretch!" he exclaimed, "he has lost sight and feeling, as well as religion and virtue. Have I given him sweatmeats so often, to be stared at as a stranger? I should like to know who was his father, that he should look down upon me. It will be a mournful tale," he concluded, "that I shall have to write to his mother, who is in great distress, and who, poor deluded creature! lives in hopes that there is still some good in this dog of a son of hers." There was a mixture of wounded pride, of disappointment, and humanity, in Blue-beard's sentiments, that made them at once amusing, and affecting.

He came, however, early next morning to the Envoy with a very different countenance, and evidently deeply affected. "What injustice have I not done," said he, "to that excellent young man! He sent a secret messenger to me last night; and when we met, ran to embrace me, and after telling me the short tale of his captivity, sufferings, and subsequent advancement, inquired in the most earnest manner after his mother. He has not only given a hundred tomans to relieve her immediate wants, but has settled that I am to be the Agent for future remittances. He informed me that he recognised the friend of his youth, and never had more difficulty than in the effort to appear a stranger; but he explained his reasons for being so cautious: he is not only a Mahomedan, but has married into a respectable family, and is a great favourite with the Prince,

and must, therefore, avoid any conduct that could bring the least shade of suspicion on the sincerity of his faith or allegiance. I shall make his mother very happy," continued Blue-beard, who was evidently quite flattered by the personal attention of the young Georgian, and the confidence reposed in him; "for I will, when I send her the tomans, tell her my conviction, that her son, whatever he may profess, is a Christian in his heart. Indeed he must be so; for if he had been a true Mahomedan he would have acted like one, and have disowned, not supported, his mother, whom he must consider an infidel."

The Prince Regent of Fars, or Persia Proper, sent, soon after our arrival at Abusheher, a young nobleman of his own tribe, Hassan Khan Kajir, to attend the Elchee as Mehmandar. My intimacy, from old acquaintance, with Jaffier Khan, Governor of Abusheher, led to his showing me the letter he had received from his brother, the Prince's vizier, regarding the reception of this personage. It is so good a specimen of the minute attention the Persians give to forms that I translated it. Its contents were as follows:—

"My dear Brother,

"Hassan Khan Kajir, who is appointed Mehmandar to General Malcolm, is a nobleman of the first rank and family. He will keep you informed of his progress. When he arrives at Dalkhee* he will send on this letter, and write you on the subject of his waiting upon the General, the day he comes to camp. You will proceed to meet him, with all the garrison of Abusheher, as far as the date trees on the border of the desert. You will accompany him to General Malcolm's tent, and, when he leaves it, you will proceed with him to his own tent, which must be pitched as the General desires, on the right or left of his encampment. If Hassan Khan Kajir arrives in the morning, you will stay and breakfast with him; if in the evening, you will dine with him. Your future attention will be regulated by your politeness and good sense, and you will always consider him as a noble guest, who should be entertained in a manner suitable to his rank and the distinguished situation to which he is appointed, of Mehmandar to General Malcolm."

* Fifty miles from Bushire.

The Mehmandar wrote a letter with this, in which he explained to the Governor, as modestly as the subject would admit, his own expectations. The Governor was anxious to know how the Envoy would receive him; and when told that two officers would meet him at a short distance from the camp, and that the escort would be drawn up before the tent at which he alighted to salute him, his mind was at rest, as he was sure such attention would be gratifying to this sixteenth cousin of Majesty.

Hassan Khan made his appearance next day, and proved to be a fine young man, about twenty-six years of age, of excellent manners and handsome in person, with grey eyes, and a very pleasing expression of countenance. At this visit he was profuse in professions of the regard in which the King and Prince held the Elchee, both of whom, he said, were anxious for the advance of the Mission.

It is not only in attention to persons, deputed by kings and princes in Persia, that respect for royalty is shown; it extends to the reception of letters, dresses, and presents, and every inanimate thing with which their name is associated. The object is to impart to all ranks a reverence and awe for the sovereign and those to whom he delegates power. In short, no means are neglected that can keep alive, or impress more deeply, the duty of implicit obedience.

Some time before we landed at Abusheher, the Envoys of Scind had been at that port on their return from Teheran. They carried, among other presents to their Prince, a picture of his Majesty, Fatteh Ali Shah. This painting was carefully packed in a deal box; but the inclosed image of royalty could not be allowed to pass through his dominions without receiving marks of respect hardly short of those that would have been shown to the sovereign himself.

The Governor and inhabitants of Abusheher went a stage to meet it: they all made their obeisance at a respectful distance. On its entering the gates of the city a royal salute was fired; and when the Envoys who had charge of it embarked, the same ceremonies were repeated, and not a little offence was taken at the British Resident because he declined taking a part in this mummery.

CHAPTER VII.

Mountaineers—Valley of Kazeroon—Virtue of Nitric Acid—Riza Kooli Khan's loss of Eyes—Extraordinary Birds—Beautiful Valley of Dusht-e-Arjun—Mahomed Riza Khan Byat—Irish Patriotism—Persian Squire.

NOTHING can be more striking than the change from the Gurmaseer, or hot region, as they term the arid track on the shores of the Persian Gulf, to the fine climate and rich soil of the elevated plains of the interior of that country. After travelling fifty-five miles, we reached the mountains. From the village of Dalkhee, famous for its date plantations and streams impregnated with naphtha, and which lies at the foot of the first range, we proceeded by narrow paths, which wound along the face of the rugged and steep mountain we were ascending. When near its summit, we were met by the Chiefs of the tribes and villages in the vicinity. These, with their principal adherents, on horseback, were drawn up on the crest of the mountain, while their other followers sprang from rock to rock, firing their matchlocks in honour of the strangers. Their ragged clothing, their robust forms, their rapid evolutions (which, though apparently in disorder, were all by signal), amid precipices, where it seemed dangerous to walk, the reports of their fire-arms, reverberating from the surrounding hills, gave an interest to these scenes which a fine writer might dwell on for pages, but I shall content myself with the fact, that we passed in security the two great ranges of mountains that intervene between the sea-shore and the valley of Kazeroon; on entering which, our eyes were not only cheered by rich fields, but also with wild myrtle, blackberry bushes, and willows. The latter, shadowing small but clear rivulets, gave me and others a feeling of home, which he who has not travelled in a far distant land can never understand. Those of our party who had not been in Persia before were quite delighted at the change of scene, and began to give

us credit for the roses and nightingales which we promised them on its still happier plains. What they had seen of the inhabitants of the mountains we had passed inclined them to believe the marvellous tales we told of the tribe of Mama Sunee, who boast of having preserved their name and habits unaltered from the time of Alexander the Great.

We had good reason, when on the first Mission, to remember this tribe, who, in conformity to one of their most ancient usages, had plundered a part of our baggage that was unfortunately left without a guard in our rear. The loss would have been greater but for a curious incident. Among the camels left behind was one loaded with bottles containing nitric acid, which had been furnished in considerable quantities to us at Bombay. The able physician* who discovered its virtues was solicitous that its efficacy should have a fair trial in Persia; and it certainly proved a sovereign remedy in an extreme case, but one in which he had not anticipated its effects. The robbers, after plundering several camel loads, came to that with the nitric acid. They cast it from the back of the animal upon the ground. The bottles broke, and the smoke and smell of their contents so alarmed the ignorant and superstitious Mama Sunees, that they fled in dismay, fully satisfied that a pent-up genie of the Faringees had been let loose, and would take ample vengeance on them for their misdeeds. The truth of this was proved by the testimonies of the camel drivers, the subsequent confession of some of the thieves, and the circumstance of several of the loads which were near the nitric acid being untouched.

The city of Kazeroon is situated near the ancient Shapoor, with whose ruins antiquarians are delighted, and whose deserted fields were equally prized by our sportsmen, from their abounding with game.

I was myself much amused with a hunt of black partridges† at this place, on which we were accompanied by thirty or forty

* The late Dr. Helenus Scott.

† The Derraj, or black partridge, takes its name from its breast, which is of that colour; the rest of its body is very much variegated. Its throat and legs are red, as also the under parts of its tail; its head is black, arched with spotted brown and white feathers, and one spot of white below its eye. This beautiful bird is found in the higher latitudes of India and in Persia; it is very common on the banks of the Tigris.

horsemen. They scattered themselves over a grassy plain, and the moment a partridge was flushed, the man nearest it gave a shout, while such as were in the direction in which it flew rode over the bird, which was hardly allowed to touch the ground before it was raised again, and hunted as before. Its flights became shorter; and after three or four, when quite exhausted, it was picked up by one of the horsemen, several of whom had little dogs called "scenters," to aid them in finding the partridge when it took shelter in the long grass or bushes. We caught about twenty brace of birds the first morning that I partook in this sport.

Riza Kooli Khan, the Governor of Kazeroon, came to pay the Elchee a visit. This old nobleman had a silk band over his eye-sockets, having had his eyes put out during the late contest between the Zend and Kajir families for the throne of Persia. He began, soon after he was seated, to relate his misfortunes, and the tears actually came to my eyes at the thoughts of the old man's sufferings; when judge of my surprise to find it was to entertain, not to distress us, he was giving the narration, and that, in spite of the revolting subject, I was compelled to smile at a tale, which in any country except Persia would have been deemed a subject for a tragedy: but as poisons may by use become aliment, so misfortunes, however dreadful, when they are of daily occurrence, appear like common events of life. But it was the manner and feelings of the narrator that, in this instance, gave the comic effect to the tragedy of which he was the hero.

"I had been too active a partisan," said Riza Kooli Khan, "of the Kajir family, to expect much mercy when I fell into the hands of the rascally tribe of Zend. I looked for death, and was rather surprised at the lenity which only condemned me to lose my eyes. A stout fellow of a ferash* came as executioner of the sentence; he had in his hand a large blunt knife, which he meant to make his instrument: I offered him twenty tomans if he would use a penknife I showed him. He refused in the most brutal manner, called me a merciless villain, asserting that I had slain his brother, and that he had solicited the present office to gratify his revenge, adding, his only regret was not being allowed to put me to death.

* Ferash is a menial servant employed in a house to keep it clean and take care of the furniture. He also pitches tents, spreads carpets, &c. &c.

"Seeing," continued Riza Kooli, "that I had no tenderness to look for from this fellow, I pretended submission, and laid myself on my back; he seemed quite pleased, tucked up his sleeves, brandished his knife, and very composedly put one knee on my chest, and was proceeding to his butchering work, as if I had been a stupid innocent lamb, that was quite content to let him do what he chose. Observing him, from this impression, off his guard, I raised one of my feet, and planting it on the pit of his stomach, sent him heels over head in a way that would have made you laugh (imitating with his foot the action he described, and laughing heartily himself at the recollection of it). I sprung up; so did my enemy; we had a short tussle—but he was the stronger; and having knocked me down, succeeded in taking out my eyes.

"The pain at the moment," said the old Khan, "was lessened by the warmth occasioned by the struggle. The wounds soon healed; and when the Kajirs obtained the undisputed sovereignty of Persia, I was rewarded for my suffering in their cause. All my sons have been promoted, and I am Governor of this town and province. Here I am in affluence, and enjoying a repose to which men who can see are in this country perfect strangers. If there is a deficiency of revenue, or any real or alleged cause for which another Governor would be removed, beaten, or put to death, the king says, 'Never mind, it is poor blind Riza Kooli; let him alone:' so you observe, Elchee, that I have no reason to complain, being in fact better defended from misfortune by the loss of my two eyes, than I could be by the possession of twenty of the clearest in Persia:" and he laughed again at this second joke.

Meerza Aga Meer, the Persian secretary, when commenting upon Riza Kooli Khan's story, said that his grounds of consolation were substantial; for that a stronger contrast could not exist between his condition, as he had described it, and that of others who are employed as Revenue officers under the present administration of Fars. "I cannot better," said he, "illustrate this fact than by the witty and bold answer given a short time since by one of the nobles to the Prince Regent at Shiraz. The Prince asked of his advisers what punishment was great enough for a very heinous offender who was brought before him; 'Make him a Collector of Revenue,' said an old favourite nobleman;

'there can be no crime for which such an appointment will not soon bring a very sufficient punishment.'"

We had an amusing account of an adventure which had occurred at Kazeroon to two Gentlemen of the Mission, who had been sent some months before to Shiraz. One of these, a relation of the Elchee, I have before mentioned as particularly averse to what he deemed unnecessary fatigue of body. But he and his companion had their curiosity so much raised by the accounts they received of two strange creatures, that were said to be in a house at the distance of fifteen miles, that in spite of the severity of the weather (for it was winter), and the difficulties of the road, they determined to go and see them.

In answer to their inquiries, one man said, "These creatures are very like birds, for they have feathers and two legs; but then their head is bare and has a fleshy look, and one of them has a long black beard on its breast." But the chief point on which they dwelt was the singularity of their voice, which was altogether unlike that of any other bird they had ever heard of or seen. An old man, who had gone from Kazeroon to see them, declared it was a guttural sound very like Arabic, but confessed that though he had listened with great attention, he had not been able to make out one word they uttered.

When the party arrived, very fatigued, at the end of their journey, the inhabitants of the small village where the objects of curiosity were kept came out to meet them. Being conducted to the house where the birds were shut up, the door was opened, and out marched—a turkey-cock and hen! the former, rejoicing in his release from confinement, immediately commenced his Arabic. The Persians who came from Kazeroon were lost in astonishment, while our two friends looked at each other with that expression of countenance which indicates a doubt, between an inclination to laugh or to be angry; the former feeling however prevailed. Their merriment surprised the Persians, who, on being informed of its cause, seemed disappointed to hear that the birds which appeared so strange to them were very common both in India and England.

From the account given by the possessor of the turkeys, it appeared that they had been saved from the wreck of a vessel in

the Gulf, and had gradually come to the part of the interior where they then were.

From Kazeroon to Dusht-e-Arjun is but a short distance, but the ascent is great; and pleased as we had been with Kazeroon, we found all nature with a different aspect in this small but delightful valley, which is encircled by mountains, down whose rugged sides a hundred rills contribute their waters to form the lake in its centre. The beauty of these streams, some of which fall in a succession of cascades from hills covered with vines; the lake itself, in whose clear bosom is reflected the image of the mountains by which it is overhung; the rich fields on its margin; and the roses, hyacinths, and almost every species of flower that grow in wild luxuriance on its borders, made us gaze with admiration on this charming scene; while the Persians, who enjoyed our looks and expressions of delight, kept exclaiming, "Iran hemeen ast!—Iran hemeen ast!" This is Persia!—This is Persia!

I was rejoiced on this day's march to meet my old friend Mahomed Riza Khan Byat, who had come from Shiraz to compliment the Elchee. He galloped up to me like a boy, calling out "You are welcome." I could hardly believe my eyes on finding him look younger and brisker than he did when I left him ten years before, at the age of sixty-eight, eating, every day, a quantity of opium that was enough, according to the calculation of our doctor, to poison thirty persons unaccustomed to that drug. My regard for the old gentleman had led to my taking no small pains to break him of a habit that I was persuaded would destroy him; and the doctor, from the same impression, was my zealous auxiliary. For him my friend inquired the moment he had welcomed me; when told he was in India, he replied, laughing, "I am sorry he is not here; I would show him that Christian doctors, though they can, according to our belief, through the aid and influence of their Messiah, work miracles, as he did, by curing the blind and the lame, are not all true prophets. He told me I should die if I did not diminish my allowance of opium; I have increased it four-fold since he in his wisdom predicted my demise, and here I am, near fourscore, as young and as active as any of them:" so saying, he

pushed his horse to speed, and turning his body quite round, according to the habit of the ancient Parthians with the bow, and the modern Persians with the match-lock, fired a ball at a mark in the opposite direction to that in which he was galloping. Riding up to me, he first stroked his beard, which was too well dyed to discover a single white hair, and then taking out a box I had given him ten years before, opened it, and literally cast down his throat a handful of opium pills, repeating, "I wish my friend the doctor had been here!"

I rode along with Mahomed Riza the remainder of the march; and, according to his account, the condition of Persia was greatly improved. Indeed the internal peace it had enjoyed since the full establishment of the power of the late king Aga Mahomed Khan, must of itself have produced that effect; for Nature has been so bountiful to this country in climate, soil, and in every animal and vegetable production, that man, spoilt as he is by her indulgence, cannot, without great and continued efforts, destroy the blessings by which he is surrounded. I was more pleased at my friend dwelling with a calm and contented mind on this great change, from a knowledge of his history. His father, Salah Khan, was one of the chief Omrahs, or Nobles, at the Court of Nadir Shah when that conqueror was murdered. On that event Kings started up in every province. Salah Khan among others entered the lists. He seized upon Shiraz, the fortifications of which he extended and improved; but his enjoyment of a royal name was short; he was made prisoner, and put to death by Kerreem Khan. His son, whose character is marked by the absence of ambition, has passed through life with respect as the Chief of a tribe, but without enjoying, or perhaps desiring, any station of consequence. He is of a happy and contented frame of mind, and speaks of the latter part of his father's life as a brilliant but troubled dream of power, to which he was very fortunate not to succeed.

The Prince and great men of Shiraz, on our approaching that city, so loaded the Elchee with presents of ice-creams, sweet-meats, preserves, and delicious fruits, that all in camp, down to the keepers of the dogs, were busied in devouring these luxuries. A lion's share was always allotted to a party of the 17th dragoons, which forms part of the escort. I heard these

fine fellows, who were all (with the exception of one man) from Ireland, discussing, as they were eating their ices, their preserves, their grapes, and nectarines, the merits of Persia. "It is a jewel of a country," says one. "It would be," said a second, "if there were more Christians in it." "I don't so much mind the Christians," observed his companion, "if I could see a bog now and then, instead of these eternal rocks and valleys, as they call them." "Fine though it be," concluded corporal Corragan, "I would not give a potatoe-garden in little Ireland for a dozen of it, and all that it contains to boot." This patriotic sentiment, which appeared to meet with general concurrence, closed the discussion.

The morning we left Dusht-e-Arjun, I rode a short way with an old reis or squire, who is a proprietor of a considerable part of the valley. "How happy you are," I said, "in possessing a tract so fertile, so beautiful, and with such rich verdure." The old man shook his head: "That verdure you so much admire," said he, "is our ruin; our valley is the best grazing land in Persia, and the consequence is, princes and nobles send their mules here to fatten; and while our fields of grain and our gardens are trampled by these animals, we have to endure the insolence, and often the oppression, of their servants; and these fellows in our country (I don't know what they are in yours) are always ten times worse than their masters."

CHAPTER VIII.

Principal Characters of the Mission—Mahomed Hoosein Khan—Jaffier Ali Khan—Meerza Aga Meer—Mahomed Hoosein—Hajee Hoosein—Candidates for the Elchee's favour.

BEFORE I proceed further on my journey, I must introduce my reader to some of the principal characters, Indian and Persian, with whom I associated. These were my companions every where; and I owed much of the information and amusement I derived on my visit to Persia to their remarks and communications. No persons could differ more from each other than my friends. This resulted, in part, from their dispositions, but more from the opposite scenes in which they had passed their lives. But a short account of them will best exhibit their respective characters.

The first, Mahomed Hoosein Khan, is a person who is attached to the mission, more as a companion to the Envoy, than in any specific employment. He is my particular friend, and is one of almost every party in which I mix; rides with me, talks nonsense with me, besides cutting jokes, writing epigrams, and telling stories; therefore I must give a short sketch of him, otherwise he will never be understood. Khan Sahib, or "my Lord," is the name by which my friend is usually known, though he has a right, from his inheritance, to the higher title of Nabob. He is about five feet three inches high; his face, though plain, has an expression which marks quickness and intelligence, and the lively turn of his mind has its effect heightened from an impression of gravity, conveyed by a pair of large spectacles, which, being short-sighted, he always wears. His frame is not robust, and his whole appearance indicates the over-care that has been bestowed upon his childhood, and the enervating pleasures in which his youth, according to the usage of Mahomedans of quality, has been passed. He has, however, not-

withstanding early habits of luxury, if not of dissipation, received an excellent education. He is a tolerable Arabic scholar, and has few superiors in Persian; he writes that language with the greatest elegance, and is no mean composer, either in prose or verse. Add to these qualifications a cheerful disposition, an excellent memory, with a ready wit, and you have my little friend.

The father of Khan Sahib was a Persian, who went, in early life, to improve his fortunes in India. He succeeded in recommending himself to Mr. Duncan at Benares, and, after that gentleman became Governor of Bombay, he appointed his Persian friend Resident at Abusheher, and in 1798 sent him on a mission to the court of Persia. This preferment naturally excited ambitious views: and, among other means by which he sought to ennoble his family, was the marriage of his eldest son, my friend, to the daughter of an ex-Prince of the Zend family, who being in exile, and poor, was glad that his falling star (to use an Asiatic figure) should come in conjunction with one that he thought was in the ascendant. But the father died soon after he had grafted his son on this branch of a decayed tree of royalty, leaving the latter what he often laughingly calls "The sad inheritance of poverty and rank combined with a most dignified wife," who, if he is to be believed, not unfrequently reminds him of her high birth, and is rather wont to dwell upon her condescension in allying herself to him. "I could," he added, the other day, "have given her some reasons for that act of prudence, but it would only have made her worse, and God knows what her violence might have prompted, so I kept quiet."

Here Khan Sahib betrayed his foible, which is certainly extreme prudence. He is in the habit of wearing yellow boots with high heels, loose red cloth trowsers, which are half displayed by a tunic tucked up, like that of the most valiant among the horsemen of Persia. His high lamb's-wool cap has, when he is equipped for a march, the true military pinch; two small pistols and a dagger are stuck in his girdle, and to a waistbelt is fastened a powder-flask and a bag of bullets; a large sabre hangs by an embroidered cross-belt, while a shorter sword, for close quarters, is fastened to his saddle; to the front of which is

attached a pair of holsters that contain two large horse-pistols. In spite of all these indications of desperate courage, aided by an upright and imposing seat on horseback, and sufficient boldness in galloping to and fro on a smooth plain, there is some want of that forward valour which depends more upon itself than the arsenal of great and small arms it carries for its defence. My friend is quite sensible of this deficiency, and is at times very happy in his allusions to the fact, and can very wittily philosophise upon the causes.—Want of stamina—coddled infancy—indulged youth—fear of his father—and terror of his royal wife, form the principal items in the list. "But," he is wont to add, "if I have, from a combination of causes, lost that strength of nerve which constitutes brute courage, I trust I have a manly spirit, the result of reflection, which, on proper occasions, you will always see me exert."

This is, no doubt, the case; but I never happened to be present on any of these "proper occasions;" and I was one of a party, where we were almost diverted from thinking of danger by his ludicrous behaviour at its approach.

The Elchee having particular business when we were lying in Abusheher Roads, had determined to land; though the sea was rough, and the waves ran very high on the bar at the mouth of the harbour. The Khan, who had recently been attached to the Mission, insisted on going, though advised not: he was very courageous till we came on the bar, where the waves that chased each other seemed at every moment as if they would overwhelm our little bark. To each of these, as they rose and pursued us with their foaming crests, Khan Sahib addressed a rapid invocation—"Allah, Allah, Allah!" (God, God, God!) and the moment we were safe from its fury, he, in a still more hurried way, repeated his gratitude; "Shooker, shooker, shooker!" (thanks, thanks, thanks!) These invocations and thanksgivings were repeated with great volubility and wonderful earnestness; Allah, Allah, Allah! and Shooker, shooker, shooker! continued to sound in our ears for a quarter of an hour; when "Al hamd ulillah!" (praise be to God!) pronounced in a slow and composed tone, proclaimed we were in smooth water. I rallied my friend* on the little composure he showed on this

* It is with great regret I state that the witty and accomplished Khan

occasion; but he defended himself stoutly, saying, he always prayed twice as much at sea as on shore. This I believe; but he is on shore even an indifferent observer of the rites of his religion, and is suspected by some of the orthodox of our party of being a Sooffee, or philosophical Deist, which seems to me a general name, that includes all, from the saint who raves about divine love, to the sinner who scoffs at the rites of the worship of his country.

The next personage is Jaffier Ali Khan, brother to the Nabob of Masulipatam. This Indian Mahomedan is a man high in rank though of limited income, and has been from boyhood an intimate friend of the Elchee. Having married into a Persian family, he now resides at Shiraz, where he has been for some time employed as an agent. Jaffier Ali is a tolerable English scholar, but writes that language with more facility than correctness. He was, in his earlier years, extravagant from love of dissipation, and is now imprudent from irresolution. He has acquired a good deal of knowledge, but wants firmness of judgment. The consequence is, that both in conducting his own affairs and those of others, he becomes the dupe of rogues, with whom such a character is sure always to be surrounded. Nevertheless, there is such a redeeming simplicity of manner, and such kindness of heart, about poor Jaffier Ali, that it is impossible for any one to keep up that indignation which his folly often produces. "My friend is not the honest man I thought him," said he one day to me, speaking of a fellow who had duped him; "I have been more foolish than I could have believed, but I will take care another time: yet," he added, with a sympathy for his own weakness, "it is very difficult to deal with these Persians, they are so pleasing in their speech and manner, and most of all when they have cheating intentions."

Mahomed Hoosein, who is also an Indian, has served the Elchee as Moonshee, or instructor in the Persian language, since the latter was an ensign of eighteen, and has gradually risen with his master, whose confidence he enjoys and merits. He is a modest man, speaks little, but always to the purpose. It is not

Sahib, like many others mentioned in these pages, has paid the debt of nature. He continued in India as in Persia to accompany his friend the Elchee till 1821, when he fell a victim to the cholera.

the habit of the Elchee to bring any man in his station prominently forward, and this practice appears exactly to suit the character of the Moonshee, which it has perhaps formed. He never goes to the Elchee but when he is sent for, and never stays when not wanted; is pleased with any mark of flattering attention, but never appears, like others, to make that his object. With this happy temper, and an honesty that has stood the test of great temptation for more than twenty years, he passes a comparatively still life, amidst all the bustle with which he is surrounded. When not busy writing letters he is employed reading some Persian book, chiefly works on the theological disputes between the Soonees and the Sheas. He holds the tenets of the former; and, with all due reverence to Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, he thinks, with the Turks and Arabs, that Abubeker, Omar, and Osman, were true men and good Caliphs, and not as the Persians, in their enthusiasm for Ali, term them, base caitiffs and vile usurpers. The Moonshee said to me one day, when I was joking him on his studies, "I do not want to dispute with these red-headed* doctors, but I must fortify myself in my own belief;" and he added, in a low tone of voice, "How can the faith of men be right, whose practice is so wrong? Did you ever see or hear such a set of swaggerers and story-tellers? I rejoice my master has seen so much of them; he will think better than he has ever yet done of us poor Indians."

The next person with whom I must make my readers acquainted is Meerza Aga Meer; he is a Syed, that is one of the tribe of Mahomed, and enjoys great respect among his countrymen, from being a lineal descendant of a holy man, the Ameer Hemza, whose tomb is at Shiraz, and is esteemed one of the most sacred shrines of that city. Aga Meer is a fine penman, and an uncommonly good writer of letters, which is his occupation. He is of mild and unassuming manners, slow in word and action; his even temper and good sense appear always directed to the object of keeping himself clear of all taint from the scene of cupidity and intrigue in which all around him are engaged.

* Kezzelbash, or red-headed, is the appellation by which the Persians are known over Asia. It is said to have arisen from their wearing red cloth tops to their black lambs'-wool caps.

The very opposite of the generality of his countrymen, he endeavours to shun all employment not in his own line; and, though a great favourite with the Elchee, he takes nothing on himself, and will, indeed, do nothing without a specific order. Aga Meer is sometimes ashamed of his countrymen; but he is usually satisfied with showing his feeling by a shrug of his shoulders, and sometimes by averting his head, and is evidently disinclined to inform against or condemn them, when he can avoid such a course without a breach of duty; but whenever duty is in question, this good and honest man is firm and temperate in its fulfilment.

I have before mentioned Khojah Arratoon, the Armenian treasurer. This sensible and honest man has the characteristic reserve of his tribe, who, from living in a country where they are subject to oppression, become, from early habit, most guarded in their words and actions. This good man is fond of a joke, but he whispers it to you as if it was a state secret. We call him, as I have stated, Blue-beard, from the circumstance of this dye being one day predominant in the colour he had given to this ornament of his face, of the size and form of which he is, and not without reason, proud. He told me his vanity was once not a little flattered by the abuse of a Persian, who after exhausting all other topics, concluded by saying, "And then what business has a dog of an unbeliever like you with such a beard?"

The most prominent among the lower servants is old Hajee Hoosein, the head of the personal attendants; he assumes a superiority over his fellow-servants on the ground of his having visited foreign countries; and he boasts that from every one of them he has brought away some advantage or attainment. He has added to a taste for poetry and the marvellous (which he tells me was born with him in Persia) a love of antiquities, acquired at Bagdad—a knowledge of Arab horses, picked up at Bussorah—skill in traffic in small wares, learnt at Muscat—some theology, and the holy and useful name of Hajee, or Pilgrim, gained by a visit to the Prophet's Tomb at Mecca; and a small but profitable acquaintance with the machinery of clocks and watches, obtained by a short apprenticeship with an eminent horologist at Calcutta. This travelled and very accomplished person, though he condescends to hand the Elchee his Kellian,

and to distribute coffee to visitors, is in great request throughout our camp, and with none more than me; and I am rather flattered by the partiality he shows for my society, owing, I suspect, to my having early declared my admiration of his various talents, and in particular of his skill as a watchmaker, on his having succeeded in making an old watch of mine, that had stopped for a twelvemonth, go for nearly one whole day.

The above personages are our principal characters; minor gentlemen will speak for themselves when they come upon the stage.

Besides these attached to our camp, we have numbers who, from frequent visits and dealings, are almost considered as belonging to it. But our mode of proceeding is now understood, and the Elchee is not compelled, as he was on his first mission, to guard against attempts of individuals to establish an exclusive influence. Two of these, made by very opposite characters, deserve to be recorded.

The first was a specious young man of some ability, whose name was Hajee 'Abd-ool-Hameed, who came from Shiraz with a complimentary letter from the minister, Cherâgh Ali Khan, to whom he had promised to discover the real object of the mission, while to others he had professed his intention of making himself the sole medium of communication and intercourse between the English Representative and the Persian government.

He pursued his design with some address; but the Elchee seeing him linger at Abusheher, and very assiduous in his court, suspected his motives, and one day plainly asked him whether he had any further business, or entertained any expectations of employment? Though at first disconcerted by these direct queries, he confessed he had no business except that of recommending himself; and he then represented how impossible it would be to carry on any concerns in Persia without a qualified native as an agent, stating at the same time that he himself was exactly the man required.

The Elchee thanked him for his kind intentions, but informed him that such assistance was not at that moment necessary. If ever it was, he assured Abd-ool-Hameed his disinterestedness in coming so far to afford it, should not be forgotten. The manner more than the substance of this observation was death to the

cherished hopes of the Persian expectant. Two days afterwards he left the camp and returned to Shiraz, where he became actively hostile to the mission, considering himself, by a selfish but common perversion of human reasoning, not merely slighted, but robbed of all the benefits he had anticipated.

The rejection of this gentleman's services no doubt prevented many speculators for favour making the efforts they might have intended. But we learned from Shiraz, that Aga Ibrahim, a native of Cazveen, who had been long settled as a merchant at Shiraz, and was a candidate for the contract for making up tents and other articles wanted for our outfit, ridiculed Abd-ool-Hameed and his plan, and boasted that he would show them all the way to win a Faringee Elchee.

The intelligence of his intentions, which was written by the Moonshee, Mahomed Hoosein, who had been sent in advance with letters to the Prince Regent of Fars and the King, made us anxious to see this formidable personage. When we were a stage from Dusht-e-Arjun, he made his appearance. He seemed a merry open-hearted fellow, and, according to his own communications, fond of the good things of this world. He was not over-scrupulous, he said, as to a glass or two of good liquor, and he boasted of having been a boon companion to the King, when his Majesty was Prince Regent at Shiraz, before dread of his uncle, Aga Mahomed and the Moollahs, made him publicly renounce his wicked ways, and march round the city to break all the vessels which contained wine, in order that young and old should be aware of the sincere repentance of the Heir Apparent of the throne of Persia.

"I had no uncle with a crown on his head," said Aga Ibrahim. "I care nothing for priests, and have never yet felt the slightest disposition to alter my ways, except when the liquor was bad; but I take care," said he, with a significant nod to the Elchee, "to have it always of the best."

This conversation occurred during the day. In the evening, Aga Ibrahim desired a private interview with the Elchee; and after being some time with him, he returned to our party evidently disappointed. We soon discovered the reason: he had caused two loaded camels to be taken to the Elchee's tent by a back road, and, after a short preamble, had begged he would

accept of both, with their burdens, as a "paish-kesh, or first-offering." One of the camels was loaded with Russian brandy, and the panniers which the other carried were (according to his report) two young and beautiful female Georgian slaves! The liquor and the ladies had both been politely declined, with many thanks for his intended kindness.

Our friend, Aga Ibrahim, was a very different character from Abd-ool-Hameed. A few glasses of wine which we gave him restored his spirits. "My plan was a good one," he said, "and would, I thought, have won the heart of any Faringee. This Elchee must have some deep designs on Persia, or he could never have resisted such temptations."

Aga Ibrahim had been a great trafficker in the slaves, male and female, which the army of Aga Mahomed brought from Georgia in his irruption into that country in 1797. He had retained one in his own family, of whom he appeared dotingly fond. The more wine he took, the more he spoke of his favourite Mariamne. "I have often," said he, "offered to marry her, if she would only become a Mahomedan, but all in vain; and really, when she is on her knees praying before her cross, or chanting hymns to the Virgin Mary, she looks so beautiful, and sings so sweetly, that I have twenty times been tempted to turn Christian myself. Besides, I can hardly think of Paradise as delightful without Mariamne!"

Our jolly good-natured friend went back to Shiraz next day with his camels, neither out of humour with us nor himself. He had failed, it was true; but he remained satisfied that it was some mysterious cause, against which human wisdom could not provide, that had defeated his excellent scheme for gaining the heart of a Faringee Elchee.

Aga Ibrahim was consoled for his first disappointment by having a good share of the employment he desired; and, in all his dealings, he was found as honest as other Persian merchants.

CHAPTER IX.

Importance of Forms—Description of those used at Visits in Persia—Difficulties on this subject—Happy termination of a Battle of Ceremonies between the first Mission and the petty Court of Shiraz—Persian Society—Fables and Apologues.

WHEN we arrived at the garden of Shah Cherâgh, within a few miles of the city of Shiraz, a halt was ordered for the purpose of settling the forms of our reception. These were easily arranged, as the Elchee, though his military rank, from the period of his first mission to the present, had advanced from that of Captain to General, claimed only the same respect and attention he had before insisted upon as the representative of a great and powerful government.

Ceremonies and forms have, and merit, consideration in all countries, but particularly among Asiatic nations. With these the intercourse of private as well as public life is much regulated by their observance. From the spirit and decision of a public Envoy upon such points, the Persians very generally form their opinion of the character of the country he represents. This fact I had read in books, and all I saw convinced me of its truth. Fortunately the Elchee had resided at some of the principal courts of India, whose usages are very similar. He was, therefore, deeply versed in that important science denominated "Kâida-e-nishest-oo-berkhâst" (or the art of sitting and rising), in which is included a knowledge of the forms and manners of good society, and particularly those of Asiatic kings and their courts.

He was quite aware, on his first arrival in Persia, of the consequence of every step he took on such delicate points; he was, therefore, anxious to fight all his battles regarding ceremonies before he came near the footstool of royalty. We were consequently plagued, from the moment we landed at Abusheher, till we reached Shiraz, with daily, almost hourly drilling, that we

might be perfect in our demeanour at all places, and under all circumstances. We were carefully instructed where to ride in a procession, where to stand or sit within-doors, when to rise from our seats, how far to advance to meet a visitor, and to what part of the tent or house we were to follow him when he departed, if he was of sufficient rank to make us stir a step.

The regulations of our risings and standings, and movings and reseatings, were, however, of comparatively less importance than the time and manner of smoking our Kelliâns and taking our coffee. It is quite astonishing how much depends upon coffee and tobacco in Persia. Men are gratified or offended, according to the mode in which these favourite refreshments are offered. You welcome a visitor, or send him off, by the way in which you call for a pipe or a cup of coffee. Then you mark, in the most minute manner, every shade of attention and consideration, by the mode in which he is treated. If he be above you, you present these refreshments yourself, and do not partake till commanded: if equal, you exchange pipes, and present him with coffee, taking the next cup yourself: if a little below you, and you wish to pay him attention, you leave him to smoke his own pipe, but the servant gives him, according to your condescending nod, the first cup of coffee: if much inferior, you keep your distance and maintain your rank, by taking the first cup of coffee yourself, and then directing the servant, by a wave of the hand, to help the guest.

When a visitor arrives, the coffee and pipe are called for to welcome him; a second call for these articles announces that he may depart; but this part of the ceremony varies according to the relative rank or intimacy of the parties.

These matters may appear light to those with whom observances of this character are habits, not rules; but in this country they are of primary consideration, a man's importance with himself and with others depending on them.

From the hour the first mission reached Persia, servants, merchants, governors of towns, chiefs, and high public officers, presuming upon our ignorance, made constant attempts to trespass upon our dignity, and though repelled at all points, they continued their efforts, till a battle royal at Shiraz put the question to rest, by establishing our reputation, as to a just sense of

our own pretensions, upon a basis which was never afterwards shaken. But this memorable event merits a particular description.

The first mission arrived at Shiraz on the 13th of June, 1800. The King of Persia was at this time in Khorassan, and the province of Fars, of which Shiraz is the capital, was nominally ruled by one of his sons, called Hoosein Ali Meerzâ, a boy of twelve years of age. He was under the tuition of his mother, a clever woman, and a Minister called Cherâgh Ali Khan. With the latter redoubtable personage there had been many fights upon minor ceremonies, but all were merged in a consideration of those forms which were to be observed on our visit to the young Prince.

According to Persian usage, Hoosein Ali Meerzâ was seated on a Nemmed, or thick felt, which was laid on the carpet, and went half across the upper end of the room in which he received the Mission. Two slips of felt, lower by two or three inches than that of the Prince, extended down each side of the apartment. On one of these sat the Ministers and Nobles of the petty Court, while the other was allotted to the Elchee and Suite; but according to a written "Destoor-ool-Amal," (or program) to which a plan of the apartment was annexed, the Elchee was not only to sit at the top of our slip, but his right thigh was to rest on the Prince's Nemmed.

The Elchee, on entering this apartment, saluted the Prince, and then walked up to his appointed seat; but the master of the ceremonies* pointed to one lower, and on seeing the Elchee took no notice of his signal, he interposed his person between him and the place stated in the program. Here he kept his position, fixed as a statue, and in his turn paid no attention to the Elchee, who waved his hand for him to go on one side. This was the crisis of the battle. The Elchee looked to the Minister; but he stood mute, with his hands crossed before his body, looking down on the carpet. The young Prince, who had hitherto been as silent and dignified as the others, now requested the Elchee to be seated; which the latter, making a low bow to him, and looking with no slight indignation at the Minister, complied with. Coffee and pipes were handed round; but as soon as that

* Ashkakas Bâshee.

ceremony was over, and before the second course of refreshments were called for, the Elchee requested the Prince to give him leave to depart; and, without waiting a reply, arose and retired.

The Minister seeing matters were wrong, and being repulsed in an advance he made to an explanation, sent Mahomed Shereef Khan, the Mehmandar, to speak to the Elchee; but he was told to return, and tell Cherâgh Ali Khan "That the British Representative would not wait at Shiraz to receive a second insult. Say to him," he added, "that regard for the King, who is absent from his dominions, prevented my showing disrespect to his son, who is a mere child; I therefore seated myself for a moment; but I have no such consideration for his Minister, who has shown himself alike ignorant of what is due to the honour of his sovereign and his country, by breaking his agreement with a foreign Envoy."

The Elchee mounted his horse, after delivering this message, which he did in a loud and indignant tone, and rode away apparently in a great rage. It was amusing to see the confusion to which his strong sense of the indignity put upon him threw those, who a moment before were pluming themselves on the clever manner by which they had compelled him to seat himself fully two feet lower on the carpet than he had bargained for. Meerzâs and Omrâhs came galloping one after another, praying different persons of his suite to try and pacify him. The latter shook their heads; but those who solicited them appeared to indulge hopes, till they heard the orders given for the immediate movement of the English camp. All was then dismay; message after message was brought deprecating the Elchee's wrath. He was accused of giving too much importance to a trifle; it was a mistake of my lord of the ceremonies; would his disgrace—his punishment—the bastinado—putting his eyes out—cutting off his head, satisfy or gratify the offended Elchee? —To all such evasions and propositions the Envoy returned but one answer:—"Let Cherâgh Ali Khan write an acknowledgment that he has broken his agreement, and that he entreats my forgiveness: if such a paper is brought me, I remain; if not, I march from Shiraz."

Every effort was tried in vain to alter this resolution, and the

Minister, seeing no escape, at last gave way, and sent the required apology, adding, if ever it reached his Majesty's ear that the Elchee was offended, no punishment would be deemed too severe for those who had ruffled his Excellency's temper or hurt his feelings.

The reply was, the explanation was ample and satisfactory, and that the Elchee would not for worlds be the cause of injury to the meanest person in Persiá, much less to his dear friend Cherâgh Ali Khan; and a sentence was added to this letter by particular desire of Meerzâ Aga Meer, who penned it, stating, "That everything disagreeable was erased from the tablet of the Elchee's memory, on which nothing was now written but the golden letters of amity and concord."

The day after this affair was settled, the Minister paid the Elchee a long visit, and insisted upon his going again to see the Prince. We went—but what a difference in our reception: all parties were attentive; the master of the ceremonies bent almost to the ground; and though the Elchee only desired to take his appointed seat, that would neither satisfy the Prince nor the Minister, who insisted that, instead of his placing one thigh on the Nemmed, which was before unapproachable, he should sit altogether on its edge! This was "miherbânee, ser-afrâzee," (favour, exaltation), and we were all favoured and exalted.

Such is the history of this battle of ceremony, which was the only one of any consequence there was occasion to fight in Persia; for in wars of this kind, as in other wars, if you once establish your fame for skill and courage, victory follows as a matter of course.

It must not be supposed from what has been stated, that the Persians are all grave formal persons. They are the most cheerful people in the world; and they delight in familiar conversation; and every sort of recreation appears, like that of children, increased by those occasional restraints to which their customs condemn them. They contrive every means to add to the pleasures of their social hours; and as far as society can be agreeable, divested of its chief ornament, females, it is to be met with in this country. Princes, chiefs, and officers of state, while they pride themselves, and with justice, on their superior manners, use their utmost efforts to make themselves pleasant com-

panions. Poets, historians, astrologers, wits, and reciters of stories and fables, who have acquired eminence, are not only admitted into the first circles, but honoured. It is not uncommon to see a nobleman of high rank give precedence to a man of wit or of letters, who is expected to amuse or instruct the company; and the latter, confident in those acquirements to which he owes his distinction, shows, by his manner and observations, that usage has given him a right to the place he occupies.

I heard, before I mixed in it, very different accounts of Persian society. With one class of persons it was an infliction, to another a delight. I soon found that its enjoyment depended upon a certain preparation; and from the moment I landed in the country, I devoted a portion of my time to their most popular works in verse and prose. I made translations, not only of history and poetry, but of fables and tales, being satisfied that this occupation, while it improved me in the knowledge of the language, gave me a better idea of the manners and mode of thinking of this people than I could derive from any other source. Besides, it is a species of literature with which almost every man in Persia is acquainted; and allusions to works of fancy and fiction are so common in conversation, that you can never enjoy their society if ignorant of such familiar topics.

I have formerly alluded to the cause which leads all ranks in Persia to blend fables and apologues in their discourse, but this subject merits a more particular notice. There has been a serious and protracted discussion among the learned in Europe as to the original country of those tales which have delighted and continue to delight successive generations. One or two facts connected with this abstruse question are admitted by all.—First, that the said tales are not the native produce of our western clime. They are decidedly exotics, though we have improved upon the original stock by careful culture, by grafting, and other expedients, so as to render them more suited to the soil into which they have been transplanted.

The next admission is, that some of our best fables and tales came with the Sun from the East, that genial clime, where nature pours forth her stores with so liberal a hand that she spoils by her indulgence those on whom she bestows her choicest gifts. In that favoured land the imagination of authors grows

and flourishes, like their own evergreens, in unpruned luxuriance. This exuberance is condemned by the fastidious critics of the West. As for myself, though an admirer of art, I like to contemplate Nature in all her forms; and it is amidst her varied scenes that I have observed how much man takes his shape and pursuits from the character of the land in which he is born. Our admirable and philosophic poet, after asserting the command which the uncircumscribed soul, when it chooses to exert itself, has over both the frigid and torrid zones, beautifully and truly adds—

> "Not but the human fabric from its birth
> Imbibes a flavour of its parent earth;
> As various tracts enforce a various toil,
> The manners speak the idiom of the soil."

The warmth of the climate of the East, the ever-teeming abundance of the earth, while it fosters lively imaginations and strong passions, disposes the frame to the enjoyment of that luxurious ease which is adverse to freedom. That noblest of all plants which ever flourished on earth has, from the creation to the present day, been unknown in the East. This being the case, the fathers of families, the chiefs of tribes, and the sovereigns of kingdoms, are, within their separate circles, alike despotic; their children, followers, and subjects are consequently compelled to address these dreaded superiors in apologues, parables, fables, and tales, lest the plain truth, spoken in plain language, should offend; and the person who made a complaint or offered advice should receive the bastinado, or have his head struck off on the first impulse of passion, and before his mighty master had time to reflect on the reasonableness of such prompt punishment.

To avoid such unpleasant results, every bird that flies, every beast that walks, and even fish that swim, have received the gift of speech, and have been made to represent kings, queens, ministers, courtiers, soldiers, wise men, foolish men, old women, and little children, in order, as a Persian author says, "That the ear of authority may be safely approached by the tongue of wisdom."

There is another reason why tales and fables continue so popular in the East; we observe how pleasing and useful they are as a medium of conveying instruction in childhood: a great

proportion of the men and women of the countries of which we speak are, in point of general knowledge, but children; and while they learn, through allegories and apologues, interspersed with maxims, to appreciate the merits of their superiors, the latter are, in their turn, taught by the same means lessons of humanity, generosity, and justice.

"Have you no laws," said I one day to Aga Meer, "but the Koran, and the traditions upon that volume?" "We have," said he, gravely, "the maxims of Sâdee." Were I to judge from my own observations, I should say, that these stories and maxims, which are known to all, from the king to the peasant, have fully as great an effect, in restraining the arbitrary and unjust exercise of power as the laws of the Prophet.

It is through allegories and fables that we receive the earliest accounts we have of all nations, but particularly those of the Eastern hemisphere. We may, in these days in which exactness is so much valued, deplore this medium as liable to mislead; but must recollect, that if we had not their ancient records in this form we should have them in none. One of the wisest men in the West, Francis Bacon, has truly said, "Fiction gives to mankind what history denies, and in some measure satisfies the mind with shadows when it cannot enjoy the substance."

Those who rank highest amongst the Eastern nations for genius have employed their talents in works of fiction; and they have added to the moral lessons they desired to convey so much of grace and ornament, that their volumes have found currency in every nation of the world. The great influx of them into Europe may be dated from the crusades; and if that quarter of the globe derived no other benefits from these holy wars, the enthusiastic admirers of such narrations may consider the tales of Boccaccio and similar works as sufficient to compensate all the blood and treasure expended in that memorable contest!

England has benefited largely from these tales of the East. Amongst other boons from that land of imagination, we have the groundwork on which Shakspeare has founded his inimitable play of the Merchant of Venice.

The story of the Mahomedan and the Jew has been found in several books of Eastern Tales. In one Persian version love is made to mix with avarice in the breast of the Israelite, who had

cast the eye of desire upon the wife of the Mahomedan, and expected, when he came to exact his bond, the lady would make any sacrifice to save her husband.

At the close of this tale, when the parties come before the judge, the Jew puts forth his claim to the forfeited security of a pound of flesh. "How answerest thou?" said the judge, turning to the Mahomedan. "It is so," replied the latter; "the money is due by me, but I am unable to pay it." "Then," continued the judge, "since thou hast failed in payment, thou must give the pledge; go, bring a sharp knife." When that was brought, the judge turned to the Jew, and said, "Arise, and separate one pound of flesh from his body, so that there be not a grain more or less; for if there is, the governor shall be informed, and thou shalt be put to death." "I cannot," said the Jew, "cut off one pound exactly; there will be a little more or less." But the judge persisted that it should be the precise weight. On this the Jew said he would give up his claim and depart. This was not allowed, and the Jew being compelled to take his bond with all its hazards, or pay a fine for a vexatious prosecution, he preferred the latter, and returned home a disappointed usurer.

Admitting that the inhabitants of Europe received these tales and apologues from the Saracens, the next question is, where did they get them? Mahomed and his immediate successors, while they proscribed all such false and wicked lies and inventions, accuse the Persians of being the possessors and propagators of those delusive tales, which were, according to them, preferred by many of their followers to the Koran. But in the course of time Caliphs became less rigid. The taste for poetry and fiction revived, and Persian stories and Arabian tales deluged the land.

For some centuries the above countries were the supposed sources of this branch of literature, but, since the sacred language of the Hindus has become more generally known, the Persians are discovered to have been not only the plunderers of their real goods and chattels, but also of their works of imagination. These we, in our ignorance, long believed to belong to the nations from whom we obtained them; but now that Orientalists abound, who are deeply read in Sanscrit, Prâcrit, Marhatta,

Guzerattee, Canarese, Syamese, Chinese, Talingana, Tamil, and a hundred other languages, unknown to our ignorant ancestors, the said Persians and Arabians have been tried and convicted, not only of robbing the poor Hindus of their tales and fables, but of an attempt to disguise their plagiarisms, by the alteration of names, and by introducing, in place of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon, the magi, and all the spirits of the Heaven and the Earth, which peculiarly belong to the followers of Zoroaster.

Nothing, however, can impose upon the present enlightened age, and our antiquaries have long been and are still occupied in detecting thefts committed twenty centuries ago. In spite of the Persian and Arabian cloaks in which tales and fables have been enveloped, the trace of their Hindu origin has been discovered in the various customs and usages referred to, and it has been decided that almost all the ancient tales are taken from the Hitôpadêsa, and that still more famous work, the Pancha-Tantra, or more properly the Panchôpâkhyân, or Five Tales; while many of the more modern are stolen from the Kathâ-Sarit-Sâgar, or Ocean of the Stream of Narration, a well-known work, which was compiled about the middle of the twelfth century by order of that equally well-known Prince Sree Hertha of Cashmere!

I have sometimes had doubts whether it was quite fair to rake up the ashes of the long-departed Pehlevee writers; more particularly as there does not now exist one solitary book in their language which we could compare with the Hindu MSS., of which we have lately become enamoured; but reverence for the learning of those who have decided this question, and dread of their hard words, with the very spelling of which I am always puzzled, has kept me silent. As I am, however, rather partial to my Persian friends, I must vindicate them from this general charge of robbery and fraud. They certainly acquired one of their most celebrated works of imagination from India, under circumstances that do equal honour to the just king Noosheerwân, his wise minister Boozoorchimihr, and the learned doctor Barzooyeh.

The work to which I refer is the Kartaka-Damnaka of the Brahmins, the Kalîla-wa-Damna of the Arabians, and the Fables of Pilpay of Europe. This book, originally written in the

Sanscrit, was first translated into Pehlevee, from that into Arabic, and next into Persian. So many learned Oriental critics, French and English, have given the names and dates of the translations, that I shall not repeat them, but give a short account of the first introduction of these famous fables into Persia, with some facts of the life and opinions of the wise and disinterested man through whose efforts his native country became possessed of this treasure.

Noosheerwân, deservedly styled the Just, who governed Persia in the beginning of the seventh century, hearing of the fame of a work which a Brahmin of Ceylon had composed, employed the celebrated physican named Barzooyeh to obtain for him a copy of this production. This was a delicate and hazardous enterprise, for the work, ever since the reign of a certain Indian King, named Dabshileem, for whom it was written, had been guarded with great care and jealousy, lest the profane should learn the wisdom that ought only to appertain to the wise and holy.

Barzooyeh, confident in knowledge and strong in allegiance, undertook to fulfil the commands of his Sovereign. He proceeded towards India, furnished with money and every thing that could forward the objects of his journey. When he arrived at the Indian capital, he pretended that the motive which induced him to visit it was the improvement of his mind, by communication with the wise men for which it was at that period renowned. Amongst those whose society he courted, he early discovered one Brahmin, who appeared to him the very model of wisdom. His efforts were directed to gain his friendship, and believing he had succeeded, he resolved to intrust him with his real design.

"I have a secret to confide to you," said he, one day to his friend: "and you know, 'a sign to the wise is enough.'" "I know what you mean," said the penetrating Brahmin, "without your sign; you came to rob us of our knowledge, that you might with it enrich Persia. Your purpose is deceit; but you have conducted yourself with such consummate address and ability that I cannot help entertaining a regard for you. I have," continued the Indian, "observed in you the eight qualities which must combine to form a perfect man: forbearance, self-knowledge, true allegiance, judgment in placing confidence, secrecy,

power to obtain respect at court, self-command, and a reserve, both as to speech in general society and intermeddling with the affairs of others. Now you have those qualities, and though your object in seeking my friendship is not pure but interested, nevertheless I have such an esteem for you that I will incur all hazards to forward your object of stealing our wisdom."

The Brahmin obtained the far-sought book, and by his aid and connivance a copy was soon completed. Noosheerwân, who had been informed of the success of his literary envoy, was impatient for his return; and when he arrived at the frontier, he was met by some of the most favoured courtiers sent by the monarch to conduct him to the capital. He was welcomed with joy, particularly by Noosheerwân; a great court was held, at which all who were dignified or learned in the kingdom were present. Barzooyeh was commanded to read from the volume he had brought: he did so; and the admiration of its contents was universal.

"Open my treasury!" said the grateful Noosheerwân; "and let the man who has conferred such a benefit on his country enter, and take what he finds most valuable." "I desire neither jewels nor precious metals," said Barzooyeh; "I have laboured not for them but for the favour of my Sovereign; and that I have succeeded is rather to be referred to his auspices, than to my humble efforts. But I have," said he, "a request to make: the King has directed his able minister, Boozoorchimihr, to translate this work into Pehlevee; let him be further instructed that mention be made of me in some part of the book, and that he particularly specify my family, my profession, and my faith. Let all this be written, so that my name may go down to future ages, and the fame of my Sovereign be spread throughout the world."

The King was delighted with this further proof of the elevated mind of Barzooyeh; all present applauded his perfect wisdom, and joined in supplicating that his request might be granted.

Noosherwân, addressing the assembly, said—"You have witnessed the noble disinterestedness of this man, you know how faithfully he has discharged his duty, and what difficulties and dangers he has encountered and overcome in my service. I desired to enrich him with jewels and money, but such rewards have no value in his mind, his generous heart is above them; he has only asked that his name shall have a separate mention, and

that his life up to this date shall be faithfully written. Let it," said the Monarch, turning to Boozoorchimihr, "have a place at the very commencement of that book of wisdom which he has procured for his country."

The above is the substance of the story, as given in the Persian translation of this work, made by Aboo'l-Fazl, and called Eiyâr-e-Dânish, or the Touchstone of Wisdom; and we have in the same volume some particulars of the religious tenets, or rather doubts, of the philosophic Barzooyeh, which merit a short mention.

The wise doctor, who is made to speak in his own person, expresses himself to this effect:—"The questions regarding the attributes of the Creator, and the nature of futurity, have been sources of never-ending doubt and discussion. Every one deems his own opinions regarding these important subjects as the only true ones, and his life is wasted in efforts to raise his own sect and to disparage others; but how many of these persons are mere self-worshippers, in whom there is not a trace of real religion, or of the knowledge of God!

"How deeply do I regret that time which I myself lost in pursuit of these vain imaginations, searching every path, but never finding the true way, and never even discovering a guide. I have consulted the wise and learned of all religions as to the origin of that faith in which they believed; but I have found them only busied with propping up their own notions, and trying to overset those of others.

"At last, finding no medicine for the sickness of my heart, and no balm for the wounds of my soul, I came to a conclusion, that the foundation of all these sects was self-conceit. I had heard nothing that a wise man could approve; and I thought that if I gave my faith to their creed, I should be as foolish as the poor thief who, by an unmeaning word, was deluded to his destruction.

"Some thieves mounted to the top of a rich man's house; but he, hearing their footsteps, and guessing their object, waked his wife, to whom he whispered what had occurred. 'I shall feign sleep,' said he to her; 'do you pretend to awake me, and commence a conversation, in a tone loud enough to be heard by the thieves. Demand of me with great earnestness how I amassed

my wealth; and, notwithstanding my refusal, urge me to a confession.'

"The woman did as she was desired, but the husband replied, 'Do forbear such questions; perhaps if I give you true answers somebody may hear, and I may be exposed to disagreeable consequences.'

"This denial to gratify her curiosity only made the lady more earnestly repeat her interrogatories. Apparently wearied with her importunities, the husband said, 'If I comply with your wishes, it will be contrary to the maxim of the wise, who have said, 'Never tell a secret to a woman.'"

"'Who,' said the irritated lady, 'do you take me for? Am not I the cherished wife of your bosom?' 'Well, well,' said the man, 'be patient, for God's sake; as you are my true and confidential friend, I suppose I must tell you all; but never reveal to any one what you shall now hear.' She made a thousand protestations that his secret should never pass her lips. The husband appearing quite satisfied, proceeded to state as follows:

"'Learn, my dear wife, that all my wealth is plunder. I was possessed of a mysterious charm, by which, when standing on moonlight nights near the walls of the houses of the rich, I could, by repeating the word Sholim, Sholim, Sholim, seven times, and at the same time laying my hand on a moonbeam, vault on the terrace; when there, I again exclaimed, Sholim, Sholim, Sholim, seven times, and with the utmost ease jumped down into the house, and again pronouncing Sholim, Sholim, Sholim, seven times, all the riches in the house were brought to my view. I took what I liked best, and for the last time calling out Sholim, Sholim, Sholim, I sprung through the window with my booty; and through the blessing of this charm, I was not only invisible, but preserved from even the suspicion of guilt.

"'This is the mode in which I have accumulated that great wealth with which you are surrounded. But beware and reveal not this secret; let no mortal know it, or the consequences may be fatal to us all.'

"The robbers, who had anxiously listened to this conversation, treasured up with delight the magic words. Some time afterwards the leader of the band, believing all in the house asleep, and having got upon the window, called out Sholim, Sholim,

Sholim, seven times, and springing forward fell headlong into the room. The master of the dwelling, who was awake, expecting this result, instantly seized the fellow, and began to soften * his shoulders with a cudgel, saying, 'Have I all my life been plaguing mankind in acquiring wealth just to enable a fellow like you to tie it up in a bundle and carry it away; but now tell me who you are?' The thief replied, 'I am that senseless blockhead that a breath of yours has consigned to dust. The proverb,' said the wretched man, 'is completely verified in my fate; I have spread my carpet for prayer on the surface of the waters.' But the measure of my misfortune is full; I have only one request to make, that you now put a handful of earth over me.'

"In fine," adds Barzooyeh, "I came to the conclusion, that if, without better proof than delusive words, I were to follow any of the modes of faith which I have described, my final condition would be no better than that of the fool in this tale, who trusted to Sholim, Sholim, Sholim.

"I said therefore to my soul, if I run once more after these pursuits, a life would not be sufficient; my end approaches, and if I continue in the maze of worldly concerns I shall lose that opportunity I now possess, and be unprepared for the great journey which awaits me.

"As my desire was righteous, and my seach after truth honest, my mind was favoured with the conviction that it was better to devote myself to those actions which all faiths approve, and which all who are wise and good applaud.

"By the blessing of God, after I was released from such a state of distraction, I commenced my efforts; I endeavoured to the utmost of my power to do good, and to cease from causing pain to animals, or injury to men."

The wise physician adds in this passage a list of all the virtues after which he sought, and all the vices he shunned. This list is long, and appears to me to include the whole catalogue of human virtues and vices. Suffice it here to say, that his biographer assures us that his latter end was blessed, and that he left behind him a name as celebrated for virtue as it was for wisdom.

* This is a literal translation.

CHAPTER X.

Fable of the Two Cats—Preamble to Persian Treaty—Apologues from Sadee —Letter from Nizam-ool-Moolk to Mahomed Shah—Death of Yezdijird.

THE preceding chapter concluded with an episode upon the life and opinions of the favoured physician of Noosheerwân. I must in this return to my subject, the elucidation of the rise and progress of apologues and fables.

It will be admitted by all, that the Persians, in the luxuriance of their imaginations, have embellished wonderfully the less artificial writings of the Hindus. The lowest animal they introduce into a fable speaks a language which would do honour to a king. All nature contributes to adorn the metaphorical sentence; but their perfection in that part of composition called the Ibâret-e-Rengeen, or Florid Style, can only be shown by example, and for that purpose I have made a literal translation of the fable of the "Two Cats;" from which I suspect we have borrowed ours, of the "Town and Country Mouse."

"In former days there was an old woman, who lived in a hut more confined than the minds of the ignorant, and more dark than the tombs of misers. Her companion was a cat, from the mirror of whose imagination the appearance of bread had never been reflected, nor had she from friends or strangers ever heard its name. It was enough that she now and then scented a mouse, or observed the print of its feet on the floor; when, blessed by favouring stars, or benignant fortune, one fell into her claws,

'She became like a beggar who discovers a treasure of gold;
Her cheeks glowed with rapture, and past grief was consumed by present joy.'*

* This, with some other verses in the fable, are from Persian poets of celebrity, whose stanzas it is an invariable usage to introduce in such compositions.

This feast would last for a week or more; and while enjoying it she was wont to exclaim—

'Am I, O God! when I contemplate this, in a dream or awake?
Am I to experience such prosperity after such adversity?'

"But as the dwelling of the old woman was in general the mansion of famine to this cat, she was always complaining, and forming extravagant and fanciful schemes. One day, when reduced to extreme weakness, she with much exertion reached the top of the hut; when there, she observed a cat stalking on the wall of a neighbour's house, which, like a fierce tiger, advanced with measured steps, and was so loaded with flesh that she could hardly raise her feet. The old woman's friend was amazed to see one of her own species so fat and sleek, and broke out into the following exclamation:

'Your stately strides have brought you here at last; pray tell me from whence you come?
From whence have you arrived with so lovely an appearance?
You look as if from the banquet of the Khan of Khatâi.
Where have you acquired such a comeliness? and how came you by that glorious strength?'

The other answered, 'I am the Sultan's crum-eater. Each morning, when they spread the convivial table, I attend at the palace, and there exhibit my address and courage. From among the rich meats and wheat-cakes I cull a few choice morsels; I then retire and pass my time till next day in delightful indolence.'

"The old dame's cat requested to know what rich meat was, and what taste wheat-cakes had? 'As for me,' she added, in a melancholy tone, 'during my life, I have neither eat nor seen any thing but the old woman's gruel and the flesh of mice.' The other, smiling, said, 'This accounts for the difficulty I find in distinguishing you from a spider. Your shape and stature is such as must make the whole generation of cats blush; and we must ever feel ashamed while you carry so miserable an appearance abroad.

'You certainly have the ears and tail of a cat,
But in other respects you are a complete spider.'

Were you to see the Sultan's palace, and to smell his delicious viands, most undoubtedly those withered bones would be restored; you would receive new life; you would come from behind the curtain of invisibility into the plain of observation:

'When the perfume of his beloved passes over the tomb of a lover,
Is it wonderful that his putrid bones should be re-animated?'

"The old woman's cat addressed the other in the most supplicating manner: 'Oh, my sister!' she exclaimed, 'have I not the sacred claims of a neighbour upon you; are we not linked in the ties of kindred? what prevents your giving a proof of friendship, by taking me with you when next you visit the palace? Perhaps from your favour plenty may flow to me, and from your patronage I may attain dignity and honour.

'Withdraw not from the friendship of the honourable;
Abandon not the support of the elect.'

"The heart of the sultan's crum-eater was melted by this pathetic address; she promised her new friend should accompany her on the next visit to the palace. The latter overjoyed went down immediately from the terrace, and communicated every particular to the old woman, who addressed her with the following counsel:

"'Be not deceived, my dearest friend, with the worldly language you have listened to; abandon not your corner of content, for the cup of the covetous is only to be filled by the dust of the grave; and the eye of cupidity and hope can only be closed by the needle of mortality and the thread of fate.

'It is content that makes men rich;
Mark this, ye avaricious, who traverse the world:
He neither knows nor pays adoration to his God,
Who is dissatisfied with his condition and fortune.'

But the expected feast had taken such possession of poor puss's imagination that the medicinal counsel of the old woman was thrown away.

'The good advice of all the world is like wind in a cage,
Or water in a sieve, when bestowed on the headstrong.'

"To conclude, next day, accompanied by her companion, the half-starved cat hobbled to the Sultan's palace. Before this unfortunate wretch came, as it is decreed that the covetous shall be disappointed, an extraordinary event had occurred, and, owing to her evil destiny, the water of disappointment was poured on the flame of her immature ambition. The case was this; a whole legion of cats had, the day before, surrounded the feast, and made so much noise, that they disturbed the guests, and in consequence the Sultan had ordered that some archers, armed with bows from Tartary, should, on this day, be concealed, and that whatever cat advanced into the field of valour, covered with the shield of audacity, should, on eating the first morsel, be overtaken with their arrows. The old dame's puss was not aware of this order. The moment the flavour of the viands reached her, she flew, like an eaglé to the place of her prey.

"Scarcely had the weight of a mouthful been placed in the scale to balance her hunger, when a heart-dividing arrow pierced her breast.

'A stream of blood rushed from the wound.
She fled, in dread of death, after having exclaimed,
Should I escape from this terrific archer,
I will be satisfied with my mouse and the miserable hut of my old mistress.
My soul rejects the honey if accompanied by the sting.
Content with the most frugal fare, is preferable.'"

This fable is a fair specimen of the style of such compositions; but it is in the deebâchehs, or introductions to letters or books, that "The fiery steed of the two-tongued pen" (meaning a split reed) is allowed to run wild amidst the rich pasture of the verdant field of imagination.

A better proof of the latitude taken on such occasions cannot be given than in the preamble to the treaty concluded by the Elchee on his first mission to Persia, of which the following is a literal translation:—

"After the voice is raised to the praise and glory of the God of the world, and the brain is perfumed with the scent of the saints and prophets, to whom be health and glory; whose rare perfections are perpetually chanted by birds* of melodious

* A metaphorical name for angels.

notes, furnished with two, three, and four pairs of wings; and to the Highest, seated in the heavens, for whom good has been predestinated; and the perfume mixed with musk, which scenteth the celestial mansions of those that sing hymns in the ethereal sphere, and to the light of the flame of the Most High, which gives radiant splendour to the collected view of those who dwell in the heavenly regions; the clear meaning of the treaty, which has been established on a solid basis, is fully explained on this page; and as it is fixed as a principle of law, that, in this world of existence and trouble, in this universe of creation and concord, there is no action among those of mankind which tends more to the perfection of the human race, or to answer the end of their being and existence, than that of cementing friendship, and of establishing intercourse, communication, and connexion betwixt each other. The image reflected from the mirror of accomplishment is a tree fruitful and abundant, and one that produces good both now and hereafter. To illustrate the allusions that it has been proper to make, and explain these metaphors, worthy of exposition at this happy period of auspicious aspect, a treaty has been concluded between the high in dignity, the exalted in station, attended by fortune, of great and splendid power, the greatest among the high viziers in whom confidence is placed, the faithful of the powerful government, the adorned with greatness, power, glory, splendour, and fortune, Hajée Ibrahim Khan; on being granted leave, and vested with authority from the porte of the high king, whose court is like that of Solomon; the asylum of the world; the sign of the power of God; the jewel in the ring of kings; the ornament in the cheek of eternal empire; the grace of the beauty of sovereignty and royalty; the king of the universe, like Caherman; the mansion of mercy and justice; the phœnix of good fortune; the eminence of never-fading prosperity; the king powerful as Alexander, who has no equal among the princes, exalted to majesty by the Heavens on this globe; a shade from the shade of the Most High; a Khoosroo, whose saddle is the moon, and whose stirrup is the new moon; a prince of great rank, before whom the sun is concealed, * * * * * * * * And the high in dignity; the great and mighty in power; the ornament of those acquainted with manners ****** ; delegated

from the sublime quarter of the high in power seated on a throne; the asylum of the world; the chief jewel in the crown of royalty and sovereignty; the anchor of the vessel of victory and fortune; the ship on the sea of glory and empire; the blazing sun in the sky of greatness and glory; lord of the countries of England and India; may God strengthen his territories, and establish his glory and command upon the seas, in the manner explained in his credentials! which, are sealed with the seal of the most powerful, and most glorious, possessing fortune, the origin of rank, splendour, and nobility; the ornament of the world; the accomplisher of the works of mankind; the Governor-General of India!"

This preamble is not less remarkable for its flowery diction than for the art by which it saves the dignity of the king of Persia from the appearance of treating with any one below the rank of a monarch. It is also curious to observe, that after introducing the king of England, how skilfully he is limited to an undisputed sovereignty of the seas, that his power may not clash with that of the mighty Khoosroo of the day, "whose saddle is the moon, and whose stirrup is the new moon," in his dominion over the earth!

Speaking on the above subjects to Aga Meer, I asked him if their monarchs were as much delighted with this hyperbolical style as the Meerzas or Secretaries. "Not at all," said he: "the late king, Aga Mahomed, who was remarkable for his hatred of ornament and show in every form, when his secretaries began with their flattering introductions, used to lose all temper, and exclaim, "To the contents, you scoundrel."* "Flowery introductions," said the Meer, "if he had lived long enough, would have gone out of fashion; but the present king prides himself upon being a fine writer, both in prose and verse, and the consequence is, as you see in the preamble of this treaty, a composition which I know was honoured by his particular approbation."

It is but justice to some of the most distinguished Persian authors to add, that there are many exceptions to this redundant style of composition. In the pages of their greatest poets, Firdousee, Nizâmee, Sâdee, and Anwerree, we meet with many

* Be-mezmoon Badbakht.

passages as remarkable for the beauty and simplicity of the expression, as the truth and elevation of the sentiments; and many of their historians have given us plain narrations of facts, unencumbered with those ornaments and metaphors which are so popular with the generality of their countrymen.

How simply and beautifully has Sâdee depicted the benefit of good society in the following well-known apologue!

"One day as I was in the bath, a friend of mine put into my hand a piece of scented clay. I took it, and said to it, 'Art thou musk or ambergris, for I am charmed with thy perfume?' It answered, 'I was a despicable piece of clay, but I was some time in the company of the rose; the sweet quality of my companion was communicated to me, otherwise I should be only a bit of clay, as I appear to be!'"

And in another* he has given, with equal force and simplicity, the character of true affection:—

"There was an affectionate and amiable youth who was betrothed to a beautiful girl. I have read, that as they were sailing in the great sea they fell together into a whirlpool: when a mariner went to the young man, that he might catch his hand, and save him from perishing in that unhappy juncture, he called aloud, and pointed to his mistress from the midst of the waves: 'Leave me; and save my beloved!' The whole world admired him for that speech; and when expiring, he was heard to say—'Learn not the tale of love from that wretch who forgets his beloved in the hour of danger.'"

We often meet with Persian letters written in a style at once clear and nervous. Of these there cannot be a better example than that addressed by Nizâm-ool-Moolk, the predecessor of the present Soobâh, or ruler of the Deccan, to Mahomed Shah, the weak and luxurious Emperor of Delhi. This letter, besides the merit of its style, possesses that of conveying a just idea of what Mahomedans conceive to be the duties and pursuits of a good and great monarch, a character which is with them invariably associated with that of a military conqueror.

The following extracts from this well-known production are very literal:

"It is the duty of princes to see that the laws are strictly

* Both these Apologues have been translated by Sir W. Jones.

obeyed; that the honour of their subjects be preserved inviolate; that justice be rendered to all men; and that loyal nobles and ancient pillars of the state, whose claims to reward are established and acknowledged, be distinguished according to their merits. It is their duty, too, to seek for pleasure in woods and deserts;* to labour unremittingly in the chastisement of the seditious and refractory; to watch over the rights and happiness of the lower order of their subjects; to shun the society of the mean, and to abstain from all prohibited practices, to the end that none of their people may be able to transgress against the precepts of religion or morality.

"It is also the duty of princes to be constantly employed in enlarging their dominions, and in encouraging and rewarding their soldiery; it being in the seat of his saddle alone that a king can properly repose. It was in conformity to this opinion the ancestors † of your majesty established it as a domestic rule, that their wives should be delivered on their saddle-cloths, although the moment of child-birth is of all others the one wherein convenience and comfort are most consulted. And they ordained that this usage should invariably be observed by their descendants, to the end that these might never forget the hardy and manly character of their progenitors, or give themselves up to the slothful and enervating luxury of palaces.

"It is not in the melodious notes of the musician, or the soft tones of the mimic singer, that true and delightful harmony consists; but it is in the clash of arms, the thunder of cannon, and in the piercing sound of the trumpet, which assembles together the ranks in the field of battle. It is not by decking out the charms of a favourite female that power and dominion are to be maintained, but by manfully wielding the sword; nor is it in celebrating the Hoolee ‡ with base eunuchs, that men of real

* Alluding to hunting and other field sports.

† The Princes of Tartary. The country we term Tartary is by the Asiatics called Tûrkistan. We have given the name of a small tribe of Moghuls to the whole region inhabited by that and other races, in the same manner as the Oriental nations called Europe Faringastân, or the country of the Franks, because they first became acquainted with the people of France.

‡ A remarkable festival held in India to celebrate the commencement of the new year, in which they fling red powder at one another: it commences at the vernal equinox.

spirit are seen to sprinkle each other with red, but it is in the conflict of heroes with intrepid enemies.

"It being solely with the view of correcting the errors of your Majesty's government, and of restoring its ancient splendour, that the meanest of your servants has been moved, by the warmth of his zeal and attachment, to impart his sentiments to your Majesty, he has made up his mind to the consequences of this well-meant freedom, and will cheerfully submit to his fate; being in the mean time, however, determined (God willing) to persevere in the design which he has formed, of endeavouring to re-establish the affairs of the empire by every means that may be consistent with his duty and with propriety."

The affecting death of Yezdijird, the last of the Kaiânian race of kings, affords a fair specimen of that plain and distinct style in which some of the best histories of Persia are written. It is as follows:

"When the inhabitants of Merv heard that Yezdijird had fled from Persia, and was within their territory, they were anxious to apprehend and destroy him. They accordingly addressed a letter to Tanjtâkh, the King of Tartary, stating, 'The King of Persia has fled from the Arabs and taken refuge with us; we are not inclined to be his adherents, we are more favourably inclined towards you, whose approach we desire, that we may be freed from him, and place ourselves under your protection.'

"As soon as Tanjtâkh received this letter he desired to gain possession of Merv, and marched with a considerable army towards that city. Yezdijird, hearing of his near approach, and of the force by which he was accompanied, departed from the Câravânserâi where he had alighted, at midnight, unattended and undetermined where to go. As he walked straight forward, he saw a light on the side of a stream, to which he directed his footsteps. He found a miller engaged in the labours of his mill, to whom he said, 'I am a man in desperate circumstances, and have an enemy whom I have every reason to dread; afford me an asylum for this one night; to-morrow I will give you what may make you easy for life.' The miller replied, 'Enter that mill, and remain there.' Yezdijird went into the mill, and laying sorrow aside, went composedly to sleep. When the miller's servants observed that he was gone to rest, and entirely off his

guard, they armed themselves with clubs, and falling upon him slew him. Having done this they stripped the body of the gold and silver ornaments, the imperial robe, and the crown: then taking the corpse by the feet, they dragged it along, and threw it into the mill-dam.

"Next day Tanjtâkh arrived at Merv, and the inhabitants sought Yezdijird in every direction. By chance the miller being met, was interrogated. He denied having any knowledge of him; but one of his servants, who was dressed in a woollen garment, having come before them, they, discovering that he smelt strongly of perfume, tore open his garment, and found Yezdijird's imperial robe, scented with ottar and other essences, hid in his bosom. They now examined all the other servants, and found that each had some article secreted about his person; and after being put to the torture they confessed the whole transaction.

"Tanjtâkh immediately sent people to search the mill-dam for the body, which they soon found and laid before him. When he saw the corpse of the king he wept bitterly, and ordered it to be embalmed with spices and perfumes; and he further directed, that after it was wrapt, according to the usage of the Kaiânian monarchs, in a shroud, and placed in a coffin, it should be sent to Persia to be interred in the same place, and with the same ceremonies, as other sovereigns of the race of Kaiân.

"Tanjtâkh also commanded that the miller and his servants should be put to death."

What has been said in this chapter, and the examples of the various styles with which my opinions have been illustrated, will satisfy the reader that the mine of Persian literature contains every substance, from the dazzling diamond to the useful granite, and that its materials may be employed with equal success to build castles in the air or upon the earth. My prejudices are, I confess, in favour of the former fabrics, which in the East are constructed with a magnificence unknown to the graver spirits of our Western hemisphere.

CHAPTER XI.

Shiraz—Shaikh-ool-Islâm, or Chief Judge—Story of Abd-ool-Kâdir—Entertainments—Derveesh Seffer—Story of Abdulla of Khorassan—Persian Poet.

Our only occupation at Shiraz was feasting, visiting, and giving and receiving presents. The cupidity of the Persians exceeded all bounds, and ministers, courtiers, merchants, wits, and poets, were running a race for the Elchee's favour, which was often accompanied by a watch, a piece of chintz, or of broad-cloth. Their conduct confirmed me in a belief I had imbibed at Abusheher, that all the Persians were crafty and rapacious rogues. I like to decide quickly; it saves trouble; and when once decided, I am particularly averse to believe my judgment is not infallible.

The Envoy had hired, as before noticed, for his Persian secretary, a mild moderate man, who appeared to have both good sense and good principle: but although some time had elapsed, and I had watched him narrowly without discerning a flaw, I attributed this to his art, and I therefore gave little heed to his reasoning when he used to plead for his countrymen, urging (as he often did), that, from our being strangers, and from our reputation for wealth, generosity, and inexperience, we were naturally exposed to the attacks of the cunning and designing, from whose conduct we drew general inferences, which were not quite fair. "We are not all so bad as you think us," the good Aga Meer used to say, with a smile; "we have some redeeming characters; these may be rare, but still they exist; but that, you English will as yet hardly believe." He used frequently to mention to me, as one, a relation of his own, the Shaikh-ool-Islâm, or Chief Judge and Priest of Shiraz: "He was," he said, "a person who combined sense and information with piety and humility. He has never come," added he,

"like these greedy nobles and hungry poets, to prey upon the munificence of the Elchee; and when the latter, hearing that his sight was weak, sent him a pair of spectacles beautifully mounted in silver, he returned them, requesting a pair set in common tortoise-shell." Though I heard the account of this paraded humility with a smile, I was very happy to find we were to meet this paragon of modest merit at a breakfast, to which Mahomed Hoosein Khan, the son of the minister Hajee Ibrahim, had invited the Envoy.

The party assembled at the garden of Sâdee, and we were seated near a fountain close to the tomb of the Persian moralist. There was some punctilio in taking our places: but the Elchee, though a stickler for rank with the temporal lords, insisted upon giving the highest seat to the Shaikh-ool-Islâm, who at last consented to take it, observing, the compliment, he felt, was not personal, but meant to his situation as a minister of religion. I sat near, and listened attentively to his conversation, in the hope of detecting the Persian, but was not successful. "You must," he said to the Envoy, "believe me to be void of rational curiosity, and a man who affects humility, because I have not only never been to pay my respects, but when you sent me these costly and beautiful spectacles, I solicited a cheaper and less showy pair. In both instances, however, I acted against my personal inclinations from an imperative sense of duty. My passion," said the Shaikh, "is to hear the history, the manners, and usages of foreign countries; and where could I have such an opportunity of gratifying my curiosity as in your society? I was particularly pleased with the silver spectacles; the glasses suited my eyes; and others in my house besides myself," said he, smiling, "thought they were very becoming. But I was forced in both cases to practise self-denial. The poor have no shield between them and despotic power, but persons in my condition; and they naturally watch our conduct with great vigilance and jealousy: had I, for my own gratification, visited you, and displayed on my person the proofs of your liberality, they would have thought their judge was like others, and have lost some portion of their confidence in my best efforts to protect them. Besides, ministers and courtiers would have rejoiced in my departure from those rigid rules, the observance of which

enables us expounders of the Koran to be some check upon them. These were my motives," concluded the Shaikh-ool-Islâm, "for a conduct which must have seemed almost rude; but you will now understand it, and not condemn me."

The Envoy was evidently delighted with his new friend, and their conversation was protracted for several hours. The Shaikh-ool-Islâm endeavoured to impress him with a favourable opinion of the law of which he was an organ, and illustrated his arguments with anecdotes of religious and learned men, of which I shall give those that struck me as the happiest.

The celebrated Aboo Yûsuph, he said, who was chief judge of Bagdad in the reign of the Caliph Hâdee, was a very remarkable instance of that humility which distinguishes true wisdom. His sense of his own deficiencies often led him to entertain doubts, where men of less knowledge and more presumption were decided. "It is related of this judge," said the Shaikh-ool-Islâm, "that on one occasion, after a very patient investigation of facts, he declared that his knowledge was not competent to decide upon the case before him." "Pray, do you expect," said a pert courtier, who heard this declaration, "that the caliph is to pay your ignorance?" "I do not," was the mild reply; "the caliph pays me, and well, for what I do know; if he were to attempt to pay me for what I do not know, the treasures of his empire would not suffice."

The orthodox Shaikh spoke with more toleration than I expected of the Soofees, who, from the wild and visionary doctrines which they profess, are in general held up by the Mahomedan priests as objects of execration. "There were," he observed, "many good and most exemplary men included in this sect, merely because they were enthusiasts in religion. Besides," said the Shaikh, "both our poets, Hâfiz and Sâdee, but particularly the former, were Soofees; and what native of Shiraz can pass a harsh sentence upon them? We must," he continued, "lament the errors of Soofees in consideration of their virtues; and even in their wildest wanderings they convey the most important lessons—for instance, how simply and beautifully has Abd-ool-Kâdir of Ghilan impressed us with the love of truth in a story of his childhood."*

* This story is given in the History of Persia, vol. ii. p. 405.

After stating the vision which made him entreat of his mother to allow him to go to Bagdad and devote himself to God, he thus proceeds. "I informed her of what I had seen, and she wept: then taking out eighty dinars, she told me that as I had a brother, half of that was all my inheritance; she made me swear, when she gave it me, never to tell a lie, and afterwards bade me farewell, exclaiming, 'Go, my son, I consign thee to God; we shall not meet again till the day of judgment.' I went on well," he adds, "till I came near to Hamadân, when our kâfillah was plundered by sixty horsemen: one fellow asked me, 'what I had got?' 'Forty dinars,' said I, 'are sewed under my garments.' The fellow laughed, thinking, no doubt, I was joking with him. 'What have you got?' said another; I gave him the same answer. When they were dividing the spoil, I was called to an eminence where the chief stood: 'What property have you got my little fellow?' said he. 'I have told two of your people already,' I replied, 'I have forty dinars sewed up carefully in my clothes!' He ordered them to be ript open, and found my money.—'And how came you,' said he, with surprise, 'to declare so openly, what has been so carefully hidden?' 'Because,' I replied, 'I will not be false to my mother, to whom I have promised that I will never tell a lie.' 'Child,' said the robber, 'hast thou such a sense of thy duty to thy mother at thy years, and am I insensible, at my age, of the duty I owe to my God? Give me thy hand, innocent boy,' he continued, 'that I may swear repentance upon it.' He did so—his followers were all alike struck with the scene. 'You have been our leader in guilt,' said they to their chief, 'be the same in the path of virtue;' and they instantly, at his order, made restitution of their spoil, and vowed repentance on my hand."

The Elchee, before this party separated, endeavoured to persuade the high priest to allow him the pleasure of a more frequent intercourse; but his kind invitations were declined in a manner and for reasons which satisfied me I had at least met with one good Persian.

While at Shiraz, we were entertained by the prince, his ministers, and some of the principal inhabitants. A breakfast was given to the Elchee, at a beautiful spot near the Hazâr Bâgh, or thousand gardens, in the vicinity of Shiraz; and we

were surprised and delighted to find that we were to enjoy this meal on a stack of roses. On this a carpet was laid, and we sat cross-legged like the natives. The stack, which was as large as a common one of hay in England, had been formed without much trouble from the heaps or cocks of rose-leaves, collected before they were sent into the city to be distilled. We were told our party was the first to which such a compliment had been paid. Whether this was the case or not, our mount of roses, added to the fine climate, verdant gardens, and clear rills, gave a character of singular luxuriance to this rural banquet.

We were at several evening parties. The dinner given by the minister, Mahomed Nebbee Khan, was the most magnificent. He has been in India; and some English usages, to please and accommodate us, were grafted on the Persian. We went at five o'clock in the evening, and were received in his state hall. In the court-yard, in front of the room in which we sat, were assembled rope-dancers, wrestlers, musicians, lions, bears, and monkeys, all of which exhibited their different feats till sunset; when, after being regaled with coffee, kelliâns, and sweetmeats, we were conducted to another apartment, where we found a dessert of fruit very elegantly laid out in the English style. After sitting in this room for about an hour, we returned to the state hall, which we had no sooner entered than the fire-works commenced; and though the space where they were exhibited was very confined, they were the best I ever saw. The rockets were let off from a frame which kept them together, and produced a beautiful effect. There was another sort called zembooreh, or swivels, which made a report like a twelve pounder, and added great spirit and effect to this exhibition. After it was over we had a most sumptuous repast of fine pelaws, &c., and iced sherbets.

The day before we left Shiraz, Derveesh Seffer, my old acquaintance, paid the Elchee a visit. This remarkable man, who has charge of the shrines* (including those of Sâdee and Hâfiz) near Shiraz, is esteemed one of the best reciters of poetry and tellers of tales in Persia; and there is no country in the world where more value is placed upon such talents; he who possesses them in an eminent degree is as certain of fortune and

* Tekkeyahs.

fame as the first actors in Europe. Derveesh Seffer, who is honoured by the royal favour, has a very melodious voice, over which he has such power as to be able to imitate every sound, from that of the softest feminine to the harshest masculine voice. The varied expression of his countenance is quite as astonishing as his voice, and his action is remarkably graceful, and always suited to his subject. His memory is not only furnished with an infinite variety of stories, but with all the poetry of his country; this enables him to give interest and effect to the most meagre tale, by apt quotations from the first authors of Persia. Those told by persons like him usually blend religious feeling with entertainment, and are meant to recommend charity; but I cannot better conclude this account of my friend the Derveesh than by giving a tale which he recited to the Envoy, with a view no doubt of impressing him with a belief that worldly success might be promoted by munificence, in any shape, to shrines like those of which he had charge.

The Derveesh having seated himself in a proper position, commenced with a fine passage from the poet Nizâmee in praise of those who, possessing the talent of recitation, give currency and effect to the noble thoughts of departed genius. After a short pause he began his tale.

"In a sequestered vale of the fruitful province of Khorassan there lived a peasant called Abdûlla. He had married a person in his own rank of life, who, though very plain in her appearance, had received from her fond father the fine name of Zeebâ, or the beautiful; to which act of parental folly the good woman owed the few seeds of vanity that mixed in her homely character. It was this feeling that led her to name her two children Yûsuph and Fatima, conceiving, no doubt, that the fortunate name of the son of Yâcoob, the vizier of Far'oun, and fascinator of Zûleikhâ,* would aid the boy in his progress through life; while there could be no doubt of her little girl receiving equal advantages from being named after the daughter of the Prophet, and the wife of the renowned Ali.

"With all these family pretensions from high names, no man's means could be more humble, or views more limited, than those of Abdûlla; but he was content and happy: he was

* The frail wife of Potiphar, according to the Mahomedans.

strong and healthy, and laboured for the reis or squire, who owned the land on which his cottage stood—he had done so from youth, and had never left, nor ever desired to leave, his native valley. The wages of his labour were paid in grain and cloth, sufficient for the food and clothing of his family and himself; with money he was unacquainted except by name.

"It happened, however, one day, that the reis was so well pleased with Abdûlla's exertions that he made him a present of ten piastres. Abdûlla could hardly express his thanks, he was so surprised and overjoyed at this sudden influx of wealth. The moment he could get away from his daily labour he ran home to his wife:—'There, my Zeebâ,' said he, 'there are riches for you!' and he spread the money before her. The astonishment and delight of the good woman was little less than that of her husband, and the children were called to share in the joy of their parents. 'Well,' said Abdûlla, still looking at the money, 'the next thing to consider is what is to be done with this vast sum. The reis has given me to-morrow as a holiday, and I do think, my dear wife, if you approve, I will go to the famous city of Meshed; I never saw it, but it is not above six or seven fersekhs distant. I will pay my devotions at the shrine of the holy Imâm Mehdee, upon whom be God's blessing, and like a good Mahomedan deposit there two piastres—one fifth of my wealth —and then I will go to the great bazar, of which I have heard so much, and purchase with the remainder every thing you, my dear wife and children, can wish; tell me what you would like best.

"'I will be moderate,' said Zeebâ; 'I want nothing but a piece of handsome silk for a dress; I think it would be becoming;' and as she said so, all the associations to which her father had given birth when he gave her a name shot across her mind. 'Bring me,' said the sturdy little Yûsuph, 'a nice horse and a sword.' 'And me,' said his sister, in a softer tone, 'an Indian handkerchief and a pair of golden slippers.' 'Every one of these articles shall be here to-morrow evening,' said Abdûlla, as he kissed his happy family; and early next morning, taking a stout staff in his hand, he commenced his journey towards Meshed.

"When Abdûlla approached the holy city his attention was first attracted by the cluster of splendid domes and minarets,

which encircled the tomb of the holy Imâm Mehdee, whose roofs glittered with gold. He gazed with wonder at a sight which appeared to him more like those which the faithful are promised in heaven, than any thing he ever expected to see on this earth. Passing through the streets which led to such magnificent buildings, he could look at nothing but them. When arrived at the gate of the sacred shrine, he stopped for a moment in silent awe, and asked a venerable priest, who was reading the Koran, if he might proceed, explaining at the same time his object. 'Enter, my brother,' said the old man; 'bestow your alms, and you shall be rewarded; for one of the most pious of the caliphs has said—'Prayer takes a man half way to paradise; fasting brings him to its portals; but these are only opened to him who is charitable.'"

"Having deposited, like a good and pious Mussulman, the fifth* of his treasure on the shrine of the holy Imâm, Abdûlla went to the great bazar; on entering which his senses were quite confounded by the novel sight of the pedestrian crowd hurrying to and fro; the richly caparisoned horses, the splendid trains of the nobles, and the loaded camels and mules, which filled the space between rich shops, where every ware of Europe, India, China, Tartary, and Persia was displayed. He gazed with open mouth at every thing he saw, and felt for the first time what an ignorant and insignificant being he had hitherto been. Though pushed from side to side by those on foot, and often nearly run over by those on horseback, it was some time before he became aware of the dangers to which his wonder exposed him. These accidents however soon put him out of humour with the bustle he had at first so much admired, and determined him to finish his business and return to his quiet home.

"Entering a shop where there was a number of silks, such as he had seen worn by the family of the reis, he inquired for their finest pieces. The shopman looked at him, and observing from his dress that he was from the country, concluded he was one of those rich farmers, who, notwithstanding the wealth they have

* The Mahomedan law only requires a small deduction on account of charity from what is necessary for subsistence; but of all superfluous wealth (and such Abdûlla deemed his ten piastres) true believers were expected to give one-fifth to the poor.

acquired, maintain the plain habits of the peasantry, to whom they have a pride in belonging. He, consequently, thought he had a good customer; that is, a man who added to riches but little knowledge of the article he desired to purchase. With this impression he tossed and tumbled over every piece of silk in his shop. Abdûlla was so bewildered by their beauty and variety, that it was long before he could decide; at last he fixed upon one, which was purple with a rich embroidered border. 'I will take this,' he said, wrapping it up, and putting it under his arm; 'What is the price?'—'I shall only ask you, who are a new customer,' said the man, 'two hundred piastres; I should ask any one else three or four hundred for so exquisite a specimen of manufacture, but I wish to tempt you back again, when you leave your beautiful lands in the country to honour our busy town with your presence.' Abdûlla stared, replaced the silk, and repeated in amazement—'Two—hundred—piastres! you must be mistaken; do you mean such piastres as these?' taking one out of the eight he had left in his pocket, and holding it up to the gaze of the astonished shopkeeper. 'Certainly I do,' said the latter; 'and it is very cheap at that price.' 'Poor Zeebâ!' said Abdûlla, with a sigh at the thoughts of her disappointment. 'Poor who?' said the silk mercer. 'My wife,' said Abdûlla. 'What have I to do with your wife?' said the man, whose tone altered as his chance of sale diminished. 'Why,' said Abdûlla, 'I will tell you all: I have worked hard for the reis of our village ever since I was a boy; I never saw money till yesterday, when he gave me ten piastres. I came to Meshed, where I had never been before. I had given, like a good Mussulman, a fifth of my wealth to the Imâm Mehdee, the holy descendant of our blessed Prophet, and with the eight remaining piastres I intend to buy a piece of embroidered silk for my good wife, a horse and sword for my little boy, and an Indian handkerchief and a pair of golden slippers for my darling daughter; and here you ask me two hundred piastres for one piece of silk. How am I to pay you, and with what money am I to buy the other articles? tell me that,' said Abdûlla, in a reproachful tone. 'Get out of my shop!' said the enraged vender of silks; 'here have I been wasting my valuable time, and rumpling my choicest goods, for a fool and a madman! Go along to your Zeebâ and

your booby children; buy stale cakes and black sugar for them, and do not trouble me any more.' So saying he thrust his new and valued customer out of the door.

"Abdûlla muttered to himself as he went away, 'No doubt this is a rascal, but there may be honest men in Meshed; I will try amongst the horse-dealers; and having inquired where these were to be found, he hastened to get a handsome pony for Yûsuph. No sooner had he arrived at the horse market, and made his wishes known, than twenty were exhibited. As he was admiring one that pranced along delightfully, a friend, whom he had never seen before, whispered him to beware, that the animal, though he went very well when heated, was dead lame when cool. He had nearly made up his mind to purchase another, when the same man significantly pointed to the hand of the owner, which was one finger short, and then champing with his mouth and looking at the admired horse, gave Abdûlla to understand that his beloved boy might incur some hazard from such a purchase. The very thought alarmed him; and he turned to his kind friend, and asked if he could not recommend a suitable animal? The man said, his brother had one, which, if he could be prevailed upon to part with, would just answer, but he doubted whether he would sell him; yet as his son, who used to ride this horse, was gone to school, he thought he might. Abdûlla was all gratitude, and begged him to exert his influence. This was promised and done; and in a few minutes a smart little grey horse, with head and tail in the air, cantered up. The delighted peasant conceived Yûsuph on his back, and, in a hurry to realize his vision, demanded the price. 'Any other person but yourself,' said the man, 'should not have him for one piastre less than two hundred; but as I trust to make a friend as well as a bargain, I have persuaded my brother to take only one hundred and fifty.' The astonished Abdûlla stepped back—'Why you horse-dealers,' said he, 'whom I thought were such good men, are as bad as the silk-mercers!' He then recapitulated to his friend the rise of his present fortune, and all that had occurred since he entered Meshed. The man had hardly patience to hear him to a close; 'And have I,' said he, 'been throwing away my friendship, and hazarding a quarrel with my brethren, by an over-zealous honesty to please a fool of a bumpkin! Get along

to your Zeebâ, and your Yûsuph, and your Fatima, and buy for your young hopeful the sixteenth share of a jackass! the smallest portion of that animal is more suited to your means and your mind, than a hair of the tail of the fine horses you have presumed to look at!'

"So saying, he went away in a rage, leaving Abdûlla in perfect dismay. He thought, however, he might still succeed in obtaining some of the lesser articles; he, however, met with nothing but disappointment: the lowest priced sword was thirty piastres, the golden slippers were twenty, and a small Indian handkerchief was twelve, being four piastres more than all he possessed.

"Disgusted with the whole scene, the good man turned his steps towards home. As he was passing through the suburbs he met a holy mendicant exclaiming, 'Charity, charity! He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; and he that lendeth to the Lord shall be repaid a hundred-fold.' 'What is that you say?' said Abdûlla. The beggar repeated his exclamation. 'You are the only person I can deal with,' said the good but simple peasant; 'there are eight piastres—all I possess; take them, and use them in the name of the Almighty, but take care that I am hereafter paid a hundred-fold, for without it I shall never be able to gratify my dear wife and children.' And in the simplicity of his heart he repeated to the mendicant all which had occurred, that he might exactly understand the situation in which he was placed.

"The holy man, scarcely able to suppress a smile as he carefully folded up the eight piastres, bade Abdûlla to be of good heart, and rely upon a sure return. He then left him, exclaiming as before, 'Charity, charity! He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; and he that lendeth to the Lord shall be repaid a hundred-fold.'

"When Abdûlla came within sight of his cottage, they all ran to meet him. The breathless Yûsuph was the first who reached his father: 'Where is my horse and my sword?' 'And my Indian handkerchief and golden slippers?' said little Fatima, who had now come up. 'And my silk vest?' said Zeebâ, who was close behind her daughter. 'But wealth has changed your disposition, my dear Abdûlla!' said the good woman: 'you

have become grave, and no doubt,' she added with a smile, 'so dignified, that you could not be burdened, but have hired a servant to bring home the horse and to carry the presents for your family. Well, children, be patient; we shall see every thing in a few minutes.' Abdûlla shook his head, but would not speak a word till he entered his dwelling. He then seated himself on his coarse mat, and repeated all his adventures, every part of which was heard with temper till his last act, that of giving his piastres to the mendicant. Zeebâ, who had a little more knowledge of the world than her husband, and whose mind was ruffled by disappointment, loudly reproached him with his stupidity and folly in thus throwing away the money he had obtained by the liberality of the reis, to whom she immediately went and gave information of all that had occurred. The enraged squire sent for Abdûlla: 'You blockhead,' said he, 'what have you been about? I, who am a man of substance, never give more than a copper coin* to these vagabond rascals who go about asking charity; and here you have given one of them eight piastres; enough to spoil the whole generation; but he promised you a hundred-fold, and you shall have it to prevent future folly. Here,' said he to the servants near him, 'seize the fellow, and give him a hundred stripes!' The order was obeyed as soon as given, and poor Abdûlla went home on the night of the day following that which had dawned upon his wealth, sore from a beating, without a coin in his pocket, out of temper with silk-mercers, horse-dealers, cutlers, slipper-makers, mendicants, squires, wives, himself, and all the world.

"Early next morning Abdûlla was awakened by a message, that the reis wanted him. Before he went he had forgiven his wife, who was much grieved at the punishment which her indiscretion had brought upon her husband. He also kissed his children, and bid them be of good heart, for he might yet, through God's favour, make amends for the disappointment he had caused them. When he came to the reis, the latter said, 'I have found a job for you, Abdûlla, that will bring you to your senses: here, in this dry soil, I mean to dig for water, and you must toil day after day till it is found.' So saying, he went away, leaving Abdûlla to his own sad reflections and hard labour.

* "Pool-e-siyâh," literally, black coin.

He made little progress the first two days; but on the third, when about six cubits below the surface, he came upon a brass vessel: on looking into which, he found it full of round white stones, which were beautiful from their smoothness and fine lustre. He tried to break one with his teeth, but could not. 'Well,' said he, 'this is no doubt some of the rice belonging to the squire which has been turned into stones: I am glad of it—he is a cruel master; I will, however, take them home—they are very pretty; and now I recollect I saw some very like them at Meshed for sale. But what can this be? said Abdûlla to himself, disengaging another pot from the earth—'Oho! these are darker, they must have been wheat—but they are very beautiful; and here!' cried he, 'these shining pieces of glass are finer and brighter than all the rest; but I will try if they are glass;' and he put one of them between two stones, but could not break it.

"Pleased with this discovery, and believing he had got something valuable, but ignorant what it was, he dug out all he could find, and putting them into a bag carefully concealed it even from his wife. His plan was, to obtain a day's leave from his master, and go again to Meshed, where he had hopes of selling the pretty stones of various colours for as much money as would purchase the silk vest, the horse, the sword, the slippers, and the handkerchief. His mind dwelt with satisfaction on the pleasing surprise it would be to those he loved, to see him return home, mounted on the horse, and loaded with the other articles. But while the pious Abdûlla indulged in this dream, he always resolved that the Imâm Mehdee should receive a fifth of whatever wealth he obtained.

"After some weeks' hard labour at the well, water was found. The reis was in good humour, and the boon of a holiday was granted. Abdûlla departed before day-light, that no one might see the bag which he carried; when close to Meshed, he concealed it near the root of a tree, having first taken out two handfuls of the pretty stones, to try what kind of a market he could make of them. He went to a shop where he had seen some like them. He asked the man, pointing to those in the shop, if he would buy any such articles? 'Certainly,' said the jeweller, for such he was; 'have you one to sell?' 'One!' said Abdûlla, 'I

have plenty.' 'Plenty!' repeated the man. 'Yes: a bag-full.' 'Common pebbles, I suppose; can you show me any?' 'Look here!' said Abdûlla, taking out a handful, which so surprised the jeweller that it was some time before he could speak. 'Will you remain here, honest man,' said he, 'for a moment,' trembling as he spoke, 'and I will return instantly.' So saying, he left the shop, but reappeared in a few minutes with the chief magistrate and some of his attendants. 'There is the man,' said he; 'I am innocent of all dealings with him: he has found the long lost treasure of Khoosroo:* his pockets are filled with diamonds, rubies, and pearls, in price and lustre far beyond any existing; and he says he has a bag-full.' The magistrate ordered Abdûlla to be searched, and the jewels which had been described were found. He was then desired to show where he had deposited the bag, which he did; all were carefully sealed, and carried with Abdûlla to the governor, by whom he was strictly examined. He told his whole history from first to last: the receiving of ten piastres; his charity at the shrine of the Imâm; his intended purchases; the conduct of the mercer, the horse-dealer, the cutler, the slipper-maker; the promises of the mendicant; the disappointment and anger of his wife; the cruelty of the reis; the digging of the well; the discovery of the pretty stones; the plan formed for disposing of them, with the reserve for further charity: all this was narrated with a clearness and simplicity that stamped its truth, which was confirmed by the testimony of his wife and children, who were brought to Meshed. But notwithstanding this, Abdûlla, his family, and the treasures he had found, were a few days afterwards despatched for Isfahan, under a guard of five hundred horsemen. Express couriers were sent before to advise the ministers of the great Abbas of the discovery which had been made, and of all that had been done.

"During these proceedings at Meshed, extraordinary events occurred at Isfahan. Shah Abbas the Great saw one night in a dream the holy Imâm Mehdee, clothed in green robes. The saint, after looking steadfastly at the monarch, exclaimed, 'Abbas, protect and favour my friend!' The king was much troubled at

* Cyrus. There is a common belief in Persia that an immense treasure was buried by this monarch.

this dream, and desired his astrologers and wise men to expound it: but they could not. On the two following nights the same vision appeared, and the same words were pronounced. The monarch lost all temper, and threatened the chief astrologer and others with death, unless they relieved the anxiety of his mind before the evening of the same day. While preparations were making for their execution, the couriers from the governor of Meshed arrived, and the vizier, after perusing the letters, hastened to the king. 'Let the mind of the refuge* of the world be at repose,' he said: 'for the dream of our monarch is explained. The peasant Abdûlla of Khorassan, who, though ignorant and poor, is pious and charitable, and who has become the chosen instrument of Providence for discovering the treasures of Khoosroo, is the revealed friend of the holy Imâm Mehdee, who has commanded that this good and humble man be honoured by the protection and favour of the king of kings.'

"Shah Abbas listened to the particulars which were written from Meshed with delight: his mind was quite relieved, and he ordered all his nobles and his army to accompany him a day's march from Isfahan to meet the friend of the holy Imâm. When the approach of the party was announced, the king walked from his tent a short distance to meet them. First came one hundred horsemen; next Abdûlla, with his arms bound, sitting on a camel; after him, on another, his wife Zeebâ, and followed by their children, Yûsuph and Fatima, riding together on a third. Behind the prisoners was the treasure. A hundred horsemen guarded each flank, and two hundred covered the rear. Shah Abbas made the camels which carried Abdûlla and his family kneel close to him, and aided, with his royal hands, to untie the cords by which the good man was bound, while others released his wife and children. A suit of the king's own robes were directed to be put upon Abdûlla, and the monarch led him to a seat close to his throne: but before he would consent to be seated, he thus addressed his majesty.

"'O King of the Universe, I am a poor man, but I was contented with my lot, and happy in my family, till I first knew wealth. From that day my life has been a series of misfortunes: folly and ambition have made me entertain wishes out of my

* Jehân-Penâh.

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sphere, and I have brought disappointment and misfortune on those I loved best; but now that my death is near, and it pleases your majesty to amuse yourself with a mock-honour to your slave, he is satisfied, if your royal clemency will only spare the lives of that kind woman and these dear children. Let them be restored to the peace and innocence of their native valley, and deal with me according to your royal pleasure.'

"On uttering these words, Abdûlla, overcome by his feelings, burst into tears. Abbas was himself greatly moved. 'Good and pious man,' he said, 'I intend to honour, not to slay thee. Thy humble and sincere prayers, and thy charitable offerings at the shrine of the holy Mehdee, have been approved and accepted. He has commanded me to protect and favour thee. Thou shalt stay a few days at my capital, to recover from thy fatigues, and return as governor of that province from which thou hast come a prisoner. A wise minister, versed in the forms of office, shall attend thee; but in thy piety and honesty of character I shall find the best qualities for him who is destined to rule over others. Thy good wife Zeebâ has already received the silk vest she so anxiously expected; and it shall be my charge,' continued the gracious monarch, with a smile, 'to see Yûsuph provided with a horse and sword, and that little Fatima shall have her handkerchief and golden slippers.'

"The manner as well as the expressions of the king dispelled all Abdûlla's fears, and filled his heart with boundless gratitude. He was soon after nominated governor of Khorassan, and became famous over the country for his humanity and justice. He repaired, beautified, and richly endowed the shrine of the holy Imâm, to whose guardian care he ever ascribed his advancement. Yûsuph became a favourite of Abbas, and was distinguished by his skill in horsemanship, and by his gallantry. Fatima was married to one of the principal nobles, and the good Zeebâ had the satisfaction through life of being sole mistress in her family, and having no rival in the affection of her husband, who continued to cherish, in his exalted situation, those ties and feelings which had formed his happiness in humble life."

Such is the story of Abdûlla of Khorassan, as given by my friend Derveesh Seffer; but the difference between perusing it and hearing him tell it, is that between reading a play and seeing

it acted by the first performers. I had heard him tell this tale ten years before, when a curious incident occured. Two gentlemen rose to leave the party when he was commencing: he asked the cause of their departure. "They do not understand Persian," I said. "That is of no consequence," he replied; "entreat them to stay, and they will soon find that their ignorance of the language does not place them beyond my power." His wishes were explained, and the result proved he was correct; they were nearly as much entertained as others, and had their feelings almost equally excited; such was his admirable expression of countenance, and so varied the intonations of his voice.

I was pleased to see my friend Derveesh Seffer treated with liberality by the Elchee. Such conduct towards persons of his character and profession makes useful impressions. But here, as elsewhere, much depends upon the selection of proper objects of notice; and it is no easy matter to resist the constant attempts which are made to obtain money or presents.

A poet of Shiraz, named Moollâh Adam, had gone a stage from that city to present an ode to the Elchee, whom he had in this long and laboured production compared to Roostem, the hero of Persia, for valour; to Peerân-Weeseh, the Solomon of Tartary, for wisdom; and to Hâtim-Tâi, the most munificent of Arabian princes, for generosity. He had been rewarded for his trouble, but was not satisfied, and his genius was taxed to obtain something more. While we were sitting in the room, at the gateway of the beautiful garden of Jehân-Noomâ, looking at the mules carrying our baggage towards Isfahan, this votary of the muses made his appearance: his professed object was to take leave; his real purpose was to read an epigram of four lines,* the concluding one of which was—

"Moollâh Adam neek sâ'et yâft."

This line, from sâ'et signifying hour or watch, might either be translated,

"Moollâh Adam chose a good (or propitious) hour,"

or,

"Moollâh Adam got a good watch."

* Roobâi or Quatrain.

The animals, laden with the most valuable articles, were at the moment on the road below the window where we were seated, and the Elchee, pointing to them, said, "Sâ'et goozesht," the hour is past, or, the watch is gone. The countenance of the poet, which had, on reading his last line, glistened with expectation, changed for a moment, but was soon covered with forced smiles, and he declared that he would rather carry the Elchee's happy reply into the city than ten watches. I trembled lest this flattery should succeed: it did not; and he departed apparently in good humour, but inwardly, no doubt, much disappointed.

CHAPTER XII.

Persian Servants—Departure from Shiraz—Persepolis—Tale of the Labours of Roostem—Anecdote of a Sportsman.

THE formation of the Elchee's establishment, which had commenced at Abusheher, was completed at Shiraz. Servants of every description were hired; and in all cases the preference was given to those who had been on our first mission; when such were dead, that was transferred to their brothers, sons, or near relations.

The Persians are more than good-looking, they are a handsome race of men. All the public and private servants of the mission were dressed in silk and cloth tunics, with new lamb's-wool caps, many with silk and some with shawl waistbands; besides, they were all clean, and had their beards well-trimmed for the occasion, knowing that, to those who pretend to figure in the train of an Elchee, personal appearance is of no slight consequence.

Thus attended, we proceeded towards the footstool of royalty. Nine splendidly dressed Jelloodârs or grooms, under the direction of a Meer-Akhoor, or master of the horse, led nine beautiful horses, richly caparisoned, with saddles and bridles finely ornamented with gold and silver. Next came eight Shâtirs, or running footmen, dressed in tunics of yellow cloth, trimmed with silver; and then the Elchee and suite, followed by a large escort of cavalry, with kettle-drums and trumpets. On the flanks of this state-line of march were all kinds of Meerzâs,* or secretaries, and attendants. Amongst the most essential of the latter were the Paish-Khidmets, or personal servants, who prepared kelliâns, or pipes for the Elchee and the gentlemen of his train. These were mounted, and carried before them, fixed like holsters, two

* The word Meerzâ, when prefixed to a name, implies a secretary or civilian; when it follows, it designates a prince.

large cases which contained their kelliâns, and all the implements thereunto appertaining. The most extraordinary part of their equipment was two small iron chafing-dishes filled with charcoal, which hung by chains, dangling below their stirrups. From these grates they lighted the kelliân, which they held in their hands, presenting their masters with the end of a long pliant tube, through which the latter smoked, while the Paish-Khidmets rode a few paces in the rear.

Our cavalcade always preserved the same order even during our long night-marches, the tediousness of which suggested that our party wanted a minstrel to shorten the distance by tales of wonder. This want was no sooner hinted, than an old groom, called Joozee Beg, came forward and offered his services. He belonged, he said, to the Zend tribe, and when its chiefs were kings of Persia he was not neglected. "Moorâd Ali Khan, and Lootf Ali Khan, that miracle of valour," said old Joozee Beg, "have listened to my voice, when it was exerted to animate * their followers to battle; but these days are gone; a Turkish family wears the crown of Iran;† I am, like others of my race, in indigence and obscurity, and now recite verses, which princes loved to hear, to men like myself of low degree; but if the Elchee desires, I will repeat some lines fit for a soldier to listen to, from the Shâh-Nâmeh of Firdousee." This prelude gave more pleasure, from its near resemblance to that of our well-known northern minstrel:

"No longer courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay.—
Old times are past, old manners gone,
A stranger filled the Stuart's throne.
A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door,
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a king had loved to hear.'"

* It has long been the custom in Persia for persons to recite animating verses, from the Shâh-Nâmeh, at the commencement of, and during a battle. The late king, Aga Mahomed, was particularly fond of this usage, and bestowed marks of his favour on such minstrels.

† Iran is the ancient name of Persia, as Turan is of Tartary.

Joozee Beg was told his offer was accepted, and after giving the horse he led to another, and taking his place in the front of the running footmen, he began as follows.

"It is hardly necessary to explain to one with such great knowledge as the Elchee, and to men of such enlightened understandings as those by whom he is surrounded, that Siyâvesh, son of Ky-Kâoos, King of Persia, fled into Tartary, and took refuge with Afrâsiâb, king of that country, who first gave him his beautiful daughter Feringhees in marriage, and then put him to death. The widow of the unfortunate prince was left, with her infant son, the celebrated Ky-Khoosroo,* to the persecution of her tyrannical father, whose conduct provoked the vengeance of the king and nobles of Persia; but you shall now hear the first battle, in which the Persians were commanded by that hero Roostem, and the Turks by their king Afrâsiâb."

After this prelude, Joozee Beg cleared his throat, and began to recite in a voice which, though loud and at times almost deafening, was not without melody. The following is a literal translation of the fight as given by our minstrel.

"Hearken to the sound of the drum from two quarters; the restless warriors are impatient of delay; the trumpet's bray is heard afar; and the cymbals, clarions, and fifes of India and China join in the clang of war; the shout of battle reaches the clouds, and the earth vibrates to the neighing of steeds. When the noise of the approaching army was heard upon the plain, the report was conveyed to Roostem, the avenger.† They told him the force of Afrâsiâb was near; that his great army rode over the plain as a proud ship rides upon the seas; that his troops were in number like ants and locusts, and covered from the eye of the beholder the mountains, plains, and woods. When Roostem heard that the army of the King of Turan‡ was in sight, he placed himself in the centre of his force; Zevâreh, his brother, was posted in the rear; Ferâmerz, his son, was stationed in front; Toos, with his band, was placed on the right. They

* The celebrated Ky-Khoosroo of the Persians is the Cyrus of the Greeks.

† Roostem Keeneh-Kh'âh. The hero has this epithet as he was desirous of avenging the death of Siyâvesh, murdered by Afrâsiâb.

‡ Tartary.

were many in number, but one in heart.* Feribooz, the son of Ky-Kâoos,† was on the left, surrounded by a family of valiant men; Gooderz covered the rear with his relations, who were all free and independent‡ heroes. The air was darkened with the swords of the brave, when the glorious standard of Gâveh§ was unfurled.

"The leaders of the army of Turan now arrange their shields. Bahamân commanded their wing: he was surrounded by men as powerful as they were valiant. The left was led by Rahrem the renowned, and the centre by King Afrâsiâb in person. The earth from the hoofs of the horses became of the colour of an elephant, the air was spotted with lances like the skin of the leopard. The world had the appearance of a mountain of iron with a crest of steel. The war-horses neighed, and the standards fluttered, while the dark-edged swords scattered heads upon the plain. Peelsem‖ rushed from the centre of the army; his heart was filled with rage, and his visage covered with frowns. He exclaimed aloud to the heroes of Iran, 'Where is Roostem? They tell me he is a dragon in the day of battle.' At this instant a shout was heard from Roostem, which shook all around. He said to his troops, 'Move not forward from the spot on which you now are. I go to silence this Peelsem, whose heart burns with rage, and whose visage is covered with frowns.' Roostem, foaming with passion, rushed to the front of the battle; he couched his strong lance, fixed himself in his seat, and raising his shield to his head, he exclaimed, 'O Peelsem, thou cele-

* "Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one."—Lochiel's Warning.

† Kâoos was at this time King of Iran or Persia.

‡ The term in the original is "Azâdigân," which means men free or independent, that are not subject to the authority of others: heroes who went more with the cause than the leader.

§ This famous standard was a blacksmith's apron set in jewels, and was long the imperial standard of Persia. Gâveh was a blacksmith; he overthrew the cruel tyrant Zohâk, and placed Feridoon on the throne of Persia. When collecting followers, he carried his apron as the standard of revolt against Zohâk. This apron remained the standard of the empire till taken by Saad-ben-wakâs, who commanded the Mahomedan army that conquered Persia.

‖ The brother of Peerân-Weeseh, the favourite vizier and counsellor of Afrâsiâb.

brated warrior, hast thou called me forth that thou mightest consume me with thy breath?' Thus saying, he struck his lance through Peelsem's body, and raised him on its point from his saddle, like a light ball. He continued his charge to the centre of the army of Turan, and casting the body from the point of his spear, exclaimed, 'Clothe this corpse of your friend in a pale* shroud, for the dark dust has soiled it.' Now the shout of heroes and the blows of maces are heard, and the voice of the trumpets shakes the earth. The deep drum sounds from the back of the elephant to the distance of many miles:† the earth was wearied by the tread of horses. Each pool became like a sea with blood, and each plain like a mountain from the slain, and every stone was turned into coral. Many were the proud who were laid low on that day. Heaven seemed to call for blood, and the breast of a father was devoid of mercy for his son. From the dark flights of the eagle-feathered arrows, with their steely points, the air was deprived of the space it occupied: the clashing of swords reached the skies, and blood flowed from the boundary of India to the Oxus. The flashing of scimitars and spears, seen through the thick clouds of dust, appeared like the forked lightning amid the dark clouds of the firmament. The day was made by death, black, like the face of an Ethiopian. The numbers of the slain filled the roads, and the plains were strewed with helmets and shields, and heads were seen as if lamenting for each other. The hearts of the army of the King of Turan were broken, and the field of battle became dark in their sight. 'Our good fortune,' exclaimed Afrâsiâb to his troops, 'is no longer awake, but sleepeth.' They left the field covered with iron, silver, and gold; with helmets, lances, and bucklers. The poorest in the army of Iran became that day a man of wealth, from the quantity of ornaments and jewels.

"'Whosoever desireth to succeed, and to avoid trouble and danger, will not wander in the path of the wicked.'"‡

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* The word means pale or yellow, and has an allusion to fear, of which that colour is the emblem in Persia.

† The word "meel" in Persian, is nearly our mile.

‡ This last stanza is a reflection of the poet, referring to the injustice of the cause of the Tartars.

Here our bard ended his battle, which differs in some stanzas from my copy of Firdousee; but that is not surprising, as I never knew two copies of this celebrated work that did not differ in a hundred places.

The attendants of the mission, particularly those who were of the ancient Persian tribes, and who hate the Tartars, were delighted with Joozee Beg's battle. We all expressed our satisfaction, and were assured by the minstrel that we were kader-dâns, judges of merit. But his delight appeared incomplete, until he heard the Elchee add to his thanks an order for a present of a few piastres. He then said he was "happy—he was honoured;" that he had often heard of the fame of the English nation, but was now, from personal observation, quite satisfied they were the first people upon earth.

The journey from Shiraz to Isfahan abounds with remains of the former glory of Persia. The greatest is the far-famed Persepolis of the Greeks, the Elemais of the Hebrews, and the Istakhar of the Persians. Every traveller has described these magnificent ruins, which the natives of the country distinguish by the name of Chehl-Menâr (forty* pillars), and Tekht-e-Jemsheed (throne of Jemsheed). Some conjecture that it was formerly a palace, others are quite positive it must have been a temple. I am much too wise to venture on speculations which have bewildered so many learned men. My reader must therefore be satisfied with a conversation I had upon this abstruse subject with some of my fellow-travellers, when I visited these monuments of ancient grandeur.

"This building," said Aga Meer, "was the house of Solomon, at least so I have read in the History of Shiraz." "And what did the foolish writer of that book know about Solomon?" said Mahomed Hoosein Khan; "but the author, I suppose, concluded, that because Solomon was the wisest of men, he must choose Persia as his residence; and every Persian will agree in such a conclusion." "No doubt," said the mild Aga Meer, either not understanding the little nabob's sarcasm at the vanity of his countrymen, or not wishing to enter into farther discussion.

* Forty, both in India and Persia, is used to express an indefinite number or quantity.

"People are divided," said the Khan, pleased with his own sally, "whether this was a palace or a temple; if it was built and inhabited by Jemsheed, it was probably both; for he says, in the Shâh-nâmeh, 'By the Divine favour, I am both a sovereign and a priest;'* and if this first and most wonderful man of Persia studied his ease and convenience half as much as his countrymen now do, it is most probable, that, to save himself trouble, he would join his palace and his temple together."

"You Europeans," continued Khan Sâhib, turning to me, "believe that Alexander, to please a beautiful lady, set fire to this palace in a spirit of mischief; we Mahomedans have the consolation to think this proud abode of unbelievers was destroyed when our first caliphs conquered Persia, through a spirit of holiness. It was a rule," said he, smiling, "of the first pious propagators of our religion, always to give to infidels an earnest in this world of what they were to expect in the next; so they and their profane works were included in one common sentence of destruction."

Though neither the Indian Moonshee, Mahomed Hoosein, nor the Persian Meerzâ, liked the levity with which my little friend treated such a serious subject; they saw he was in too lively a vein to expect to check him, but they looked grave. This, he observed, and to change the subject, asked me what I thought was the meaning of a figure, to which he pointed, half of whose body appeared rising out of a circle, and to which wings were attached? I told him, he could not apply to one who was more ignorant of such subjects than myself, but I would tell him what the learned of Europe had conjectured regarding this mystical figure.

The detail was long, and embraced a variety of opinions; but I concluded by observing, that the figure was believed to be that of a Ferooher, or spirit, which, according to the doctrine of Zoroaster, is an associate of an existing being, with whose soul or spiritual part it is united before birth and after death.

"These Feroohers," said I, "were sometimes invoked as guardian angels: they were male and female, and were not, in their connection with this earth, limited to human creatures;

* Men-em gooft bâ-ferra-e-Eezidee Be-hem sheheryâree be-hem Moobidee.

some of the race belonged to the vegetable world. Trees had their Feroohers." I was becoming more than learned, I was mystical, and on the point of showing some striking analogies between these aerial spirits of the ancient Persians, and the Sylphs, the Dryads, and the Hamadryads of the Greeks, when Khan Sâhib, anxious to make amends with his Mahomedan friends, for the slight which he saw they supposed he had put upon the first caliphs, interrupted me by saying—

"Well, God knows! however we may question the humanity, if not the policy, of extirpating whole races of men, because they did not believe exactly as we do, assuredly the founders of our holy religion have merit in putting an end to Feroohers, and all such trumpery as you have been talking about. There is enough of wicked flesh and blood in this world to give an honest man trouble and alarm, without his being scared in a wood, or frightened in his sleep by ghosts, spirits, and demons. The Glorious Volume,* thank heaven, has put an end to all these gentry. But, after all, I really wish (looking round at the ruins) that while it conferred this benefit upon us, and gave us more space in the world, by the removal of some incorrigible infidels, it had spared some of their best works, if it were only as specimens of their folly and pride."

As he was concluding this sentence, Hajee Hoosein came from the Elchee with pipes and coffee for our refreshment. "You were speaking of good works," said the Hajee. "I was speaking of works," said the Khan. "It is all the same," replied the Hajee, determined not to lose an opportunity of showing his reading: "works are everything in this world, as Sâdee says—'Alas, for him that 's gone, and done no work! The drum of departure has beat, and his burden is not made up.'" †

The admiration given to the expression and sentiment of the moralist of Persia did not prevent a laugh at the manner in which it was applied. The Hajee, however, was not displeased with our mirth; he was too full of Sâdee's apophthegms and stanzas, and too eager to mix in conversation, to be particular as to the time or place in which he gave utterance to his recol-

* Mes'hef-e-Mejeed, a pious allusion to the Koran.

† "Heif, ber ân kih reft oo kâr ne-sâkht
Koos-e-rihlet zed oo bâr ne-sâkht!"

lections; and their want of application often rendered them more entertaining.

We returned to our tents with a resolution of completing our knowledge of the wonders of this place, by a visit to the famous rocks in the vicinity of Persepolis, which are called "The Sculptures of Roostem." *

Though there can be little doubt, from the similarity of these figures to those on the Sassanian coins, that they have been made to perpetuate the glory of the first sovereigns of that family; yet, when I on the ensuing day mentioned this conjecture to my Persian friends, I found I was regarded as an envious Frank, who wanted to detract from their hero Roostem, with whose fame all that is valiant, powerful, or wonderful in this country is associated: and whose name has been given to this, as it has been to all other sculptures representing any warlike deeds, of which the precise history is unknown.

In order to make amends for the errors of my knowledge, I commenced a panegyric on their favourite warrior. "We have," I said, "an account from the Greeks of a celebrated hero of theirs called Hercules, whom they have deified, and whom many of our learned confound with Roostem; but this Hercules was, in my opinion, hardly fit to carry the slippers of your hero.

"The Greeks talk of the club of Hercules, but what was his club to the bull-headed mace with which Roostem destroyed whole armies? Hercules, when an infant, crushed a couple of serpents; but Roostem, when a child, brained a furious elephant: Hercules shot his enemy, Ephialtes, in one eye; but Roostem did twice as much, for with a forked arrow he sealed in eternal darkness both eyes of the prince Esfendiâr: Hercules wore a lion's hide; Roostem had, according to Firdousee, a vest made of the skins of several lions. Both heroes had supernatural aid, but Roostem seldom required it; for he was endowed with the strength of one hundred and twenty elephants;† and out of fifty thousand horses one only, the celebrated Reksh, was found capable of bearing his weight.

* Neksha-e-Roostem.

† This, in the present *vapouring* age, would be called a hundred and twenty elephant-power; but I dare not take a liberty with my text when recording facts.

"Hercules," I continued, "we are told by the Greeks (who, however, are great romancers), accomplished twelve labours; but what are these compared to the Heft Kh'ân, or Seven Stages of Roostem? Besides, it is doubted whether Hercules could ride—he certainly had no horse of any fame; whereas Reksh excelled all horses as much as his rider did all men."

This moderate and just tribute to the hero of Persia quite restored me to the good graces of my friends, who concurred with me in requesting our old minstrel, who had charge of the horses of some of our party, to recount to us the story of the Heft Kh'ân, or Seven Stages of Roostem. He could not, he said, recite these great events as written in the page of the immortal Firdousee; but if we would be satisfied, he could give us the tale in prose, as he had heard it read from the Shemsheer-Khânee.* Being assured that what he recollected of the story would be quite enough, and his audience having seated themselves beneath the sculptured rocks, he began as follows:

"Persia was at peace, and prosperous; but its king, Ky-Kâoos, could never remain at rest. A favourite singer gave him one day an animated account of the beauties of the neighbouring kingdom of Mazenderan;† its ever blooming roses, its melodious nightingales, its verdant plains, its mountains shaded with lofty trees, and adorned to their summits with flowers which perfumed the air, its clear murmuring rivulets, and, above all, its lovely damsels and valiant warriors.

"All these were described to the sovereign in such glowing colours, that he quite lost his reason, and declared he should never be happy till his power extended over a country so favoured by nature. It was in vain that his wisest ministers and most attached nobles dissuaded him from so hazardous an enterprise as that of invading a region, which had, besides other defenders, a number of Deevs, or demons, who, acting under their renowned chief Deev-e-Seffeed, or the White Demon, had hitherto defeated all enemies."

"Is the Deev-e-Seffeed," said I, stopping the narrator, and turning to Aga Meer, "believed by modern Persians to have

* The Shemsheer-Khânee is a prose abridgment of the Shâh-Nâmeh, into which are introduced some of the finest passages of Firdousee's poetry.

† The ancient Hyrcania.

been a supernatural being, as his name implies? or is this deemed a poetical fiction of Firdousee to describe a formidable warrior, perhaps a more northern prince, and therefore of a fairer complexion?" "Why," said the Meer, "it is with us almost a crime to refuse belief to a single line Firdousee has written; but though there is no doubt he has given the account of these Deevs as he found it, in the public records from which he composed his great historical poem; we find in some of our best dictionaries, such as the Jehângeeree, and Boorhân-e-Kâtih, the word Deev rendered 'a valiant warrior,' which shows that the learned authors of these works entertained the same notion as you do."

"If I had written a dictionary," said Mahomed Hoosein Khan, "I should have solved the difficulty by explaining, that Deev was a man who fought like a devil."

This little sally finished our grave disquisition; and Joozee Beg, who seemed not a little impatient at the interruption, resumed his narration.

"Ky-Kâoos," as I said before, "would not listen to his nobles, who in despair sent for old Zâl, the father of Roostem, and prince of Seestan. Zâl came and used all his efforts, but in vain; the monarch was involved in clouds of pride, and closed a discussion he had with Zâl, by exclaiming, 'The Creator of the world is my friend; the chief of the Deevs is my prey.'* This impious boasting satisfied Zâl he could do no good; and he even refused to become regent of Persia in the absence of Ky-Kâoos, but promised to aid with his counsel.

"The king departed to anticipated conquest; but the prince of Mazenderan summoned his forces, and above all the Deev-e-Seffeed and his band. They came at his call: a great battle† ensued, in which the Persians were completely defeated. Ky-Kâoos was made prisoner and confined in a strong fortress under the guard of a hundred Deevs, commanded by Arjeng, who was instructed to ask the Persian monarch every morning how he

* "Jehân-âfireenendeh yâr-e-men est
Ser-e-nereh deevân shikâr-e-men est."

† It was in this battle that the armies were, according to Firdousee, enveloped in sudden darkness, as had been foretold by a magician. The mention of this fact proves it to be the same action during which, Herodotus tells us, a total eclipse of the sun took place, as had been foretold by Thales the Milesian.—Vide Hist. of Persia, vol. i. p. 3.

liked the roses, nightingales, flowers, trees, verdant meadows, shady mountains, clear streams, beautiful damsels, and valiant warriors of Mazenderan?

"The news of this disaster soon spread over Persia, and notwithstanding the disgust of old Zâl at the headstrong folly of his monarch, he was deeply afflicted at the tale of his misfortune and disgrace. He sent for Roostem, to whom he said, 'Go, my son, and with thy single arm, and thy good horse, Reksh, release our sovereign.' Roostem instantly obeyed. There were two roads, but he chose the nearest, though it was reported to be by far the most difficult and dangerous. Now," said Joozee Beg, "it would occupy the whole day if I was to relate at length the adventures of the heft khân: a short account of the obstacles which the hero overcame at each will suffice.

"Fatigued with his first day's journey, Roostem lay down to sleep, having turned Reksh loose to graze in a neighbouring meadow, where he was attacked by a furious lion; but this wonderful horse, after a short contest, struck his antagonist to the ground with a blow from his fore-hoof, and completed the victory by seizing the throat of the royal animal with his teeth. When Roostem awoke, he was surprised and enraged. He desired Reksh never again to attempt, unaided, such an encounter. 'Hadst thou been slain,' asked he of the intelligent brute, 'how should I have accomplished my enterprise?'

"At the second stage Roostem had nearly died of thirst, but his prayers to the Almighty were heard: a fawn appeared, as if to be his guide, and following it, he was conducted to a clear fountain, where, after regaling on the flesh of a wild ass,* which he had killed with his bow, he lay down to sleep. In the middle of the night a monstrous serpent, seventy yards in length, came out of its hiding-place, and made at the hero, who was awaked by the neighing of Reksh; but the serpent had crept back to his hiding-place, and Roostem seeing no danger, abused his faithful horse for disturbing his repose. Another attempt of the serpent was defeated in the same way; but as the monster had again concealed himself, Roostem lost all patience with Reksh, whom he threatened to put to death if he again awaked him by any such unseasonable noises. The faithful steed, fearing his master's

* Goor.

rage, but strong in his attachment, instead of neighing when the serpent again made his appearance, sprung upon it, and commenced a furious contest! Roostem, hearing the noise, started up and joined in the combat. The serpent darted at him, but he avoided it, and, while his noble horse seized their enemy by the back, the hero cut off its head with his sword.

"When the serpent was slain, Roostem contemplated its enormous size with amazement, and, with that piety which always distinguished him, returned thanks to the Almighty for his miraculous escape.

"Next day, as Roostem sat by a fountain, he saw a beautiful damsel regaling herself with wine. He approached her, accepted her invitation to partake of the beverage, and clasped her in his arms as if she had been an angel. It happened, in the course of their conversation, that the Persian hero mentioned the name of the great God he adored. At the sound of that sacred word the fair features and shape of the female changed, and she became black, ugly, and deformed. The astonished Roostem seized her, and, after binding her hands, bid her declare who she was. 'I am a sorceress,' was the reply, 'and have been employed by the evil-spirit Aharman for thy destruction: but save my life, and I am powerful to do thee service.' 'I make no compact with the devil or his agents,' said the hero, and cut her in twain. He again poured forth his soul in thanksgiving to God for his deliverance.

On his fourth stage Roostem lost his way. While wandering about he came to a clear rivulet, on the banks of which he lay down to take some repose, having first turned Reksh loose into a field of grain. A gardener who had charge of it came and awoke the hero, telling him, in an insolent tone, that he would soon suffer for his temerity, as the field in which his horse was feeding belonged to a pehloovân, or warrior, called Oulâd. Roostem, always irascible, but particularly so when disturbed in his slumbers, jumped up, tore off the gardener's ears, and gave him a blow with his fist that broke his nose and teeth. 'Take these marks of my temper to your master,' he said, 'and tell him to come here, and he shall have a similar welcome.'

"Oulâd, when informed of what had passed, was excited to fury, and prepared to assail the Persian hero, who, expecting

him, had put on his armour, and mounted Reksh. His appearance so dismayed Oulâd, that he dared not venture on the combat till he had summoned his adherents. They all fell upon Roostem at once; but the base-born caitiffs were scattered like chaff before the wind: many were slain, others fled, among whom was their chief. Him Roostem came up with at the fifth stage, and having thrown his noose* over him, took him prisoner. Oulâd, in order to save his life, not only gave him full information of the place where his sovereign was confined, and of the strength of the Deev-e-Seffeed, but offered to give the hero every aid in the accomplishment of his perilous enterprise. This offer was accepted, and he proved a most useful auxiliary.

"On the sixth day they saw in the distance the city of Mazenderan, near which the Deev-e-Seffeed resided. Two chieftains, with numerous attendants, met them; and one had the audacity to ride up to Roostem, and seize him by the belt. That chief's fury at this insolence was unbounded; he disdained, however, to use his arms against such an enemy, but seizing the miscreant's head, wrenched it from the body, and hurled it at his companions, who fled in terror and dismay at this terrible proof of the hero's prowess.

"Roostem proceeded, after this action, with his guide to the castle where the king was confined. The Deevs who guarded it were asleep, and Ky-Kâoos was found in a solitary cell, chained to the ground. He recognised Roostem, and bursting into tears, pressed his deliverer to his bosom. Roostem immediately began to knock off his chains: the noise occasioned by this awoke the Deevs, whose leader, Beedâr-Reng, advanced to seize Roostem; but the appearance and threats of the latter so overawed him, that he consented to purchase his own safety by the instant release of the Persian king and all his followers.

"After this achievement Roostem proceeded to the last and greatest of his labours, the attack of the Deev-e-Seffeed. Oulâd told him, that the Deevs watched and feasted during the night,

* The kemend or noose of the ancient Persians appears to be the lasso of the modern South Americans, and was employed to snare prisoners as well as wild cattle. It is well known and often used in India by some tribes of robbers and murderers of that country, who cast it over the head of the unwary traveller with an expertness that would do credit to a native of the Pampas.

but slept during the heat of the day, hating (according to our narrator) the sun-beams. Roostem, as he advanced, saw an immense army drawn out: he thought it better, before he attacked them, to refresh himself by some repose. Having laid himself down, he soon fell into a sound sleep, and at day-light he awoke quite refreshed. As soon as the sun became warm, he rushed into the camp. The heavy blows of his mace soon awoke the surprised and slumbering guards of the Deev-e-Seffeed: they collected in myriads, hoping to impede his progress; but all in vain. The rout became general, and none escaped but those who fled from the field of battle.

"When this army was dispersed Roostem went in search of the Deev-e-Seffeed, who, ignorant of the fate of his followers, slumbered in the recess of a cavern, the entrance to which looked so dark and gloomy, that the Persian hero hesitated whether he should advance, but the noise of his approach had roused his enemy, who came forth, clothed in complete armour. His appearance was terrible; but Roostem, recommending his soul to God, struck a desperate blow, which separated the leg of the Deev from his body. This," said Joozee Beg, "would on common occasions have terminated the contest, but far different was the result on the present. Irritated to madness by the loss of a limb, the monster seized his enemy in his arms, and endeavoured to throw him down. The struggle was for some time doubtful; but Roostem, collecting all his strength, by a wondrous effort dashed his foe to the ground, and seizing him by one of the horns, unsheathed his dagger, and stabbed him to the heart.* The Deev-e-Seffeed instantly expired; and Roostem, on looking round to the entrance of the cavern, from whence the moment before he had seen numberless Deevs issuing to the aid of their lord, perceived they were all dead. Oulâd, who stood at a prudent distance from the scene of combat, now advanced and informed the hero, that the lives of all the Deevs depended upon that of their chief: when he was slain, the spell which created and preserved this band was broken, and they all expired.

"Roostem," said our narrator, "found little difficulty, after

* A representation of this combat is given in Dibdin's Decameron, vol. iii p. 475.

these seven days of toil, of danger, and of glory, in compelling Mazenderan to submit to Persia. The king of the country was slain, and Oulâd was appointed its governor as a reward for his fidelity.

"It would weary you," said Joozee Beg, "were I to detail all the misfortunes and distresses into which Ky-Kâoos subsequently brought himself. by a pride and folly which were only equalled by the wisdom and valour of Zâl and his son Roostem; but one instance will suffice."

Hajee Hoosein, who was in attendance, whispered to me, "It is true, as Sâdee says, 'A wise man does not always know when to begin, but a fool never knows when to stop.'" I smiled, but shook my head, and Joozee proceeded.

"The event I am about to narrate," said he, "appears so wonderful, that I should doubt its truth, if I did not know it was written in the book I before told you of.

"The success of his arms had raised Ky-Kâoos to the very plenitude of power; not only men but Deevs obeyed his mandates. The latter he employed in building palaces of crystal, emeralds, and rubies, till at last they became quite tired of their toil and abject condition. They sought, therefore, to destroy him; and to effect this they consulted with the devil, who, to forward the object, instructed a Deev, called Dizjkheem, to go to Ky-Kâoos, and raise in his mind a passion for astronomy, and to promise him a nearer view of the celestial bodies than had ever yet been enjoyed by mortal eyes. The Deev fulfilled his commission with such success, that the king became quite wild with a desire to attain perfection in this sublime science. The devil then instructed Dizjkheem to train some young vultures to carry a throne upwards: this was done by placing spears round the throne, on the points of which pieces of flesh were fixed in view of the vultures who were fastened at the bottom. These voracious birds, in their efforts to reach the meat, raised the throne—"

Joozee Beg here stopt, seeing me hardly able to suppress a laugh. "You do not credit this story," he said. "You mistake," I replied; "I am only struck with a remarkable coincidence. In a sister kingdom of England, called Ireland, the natives, according to a learned author, trick their horses into a

trot, by binding a wisp of hay to the end of a pole to which they are harnessed, and, like your vultures, they constantly strive but never attain their desire: their efforts to reach the food fulfil the object of the ingenious author of this useful invention. He was only a mortal, however, and could do no more than impel a vehicle along the earth; the scheme of the devil is more sublime, and we shall, I trust, hear of Ky-Kâoos reaching the seventh heaven!" "He was not so fortunate," said Joozee Beg; "for though he mounted rapidly for some time, the vultures became exhausted, and finding their efforts to reach the meat hopeless, discontinued them; this altered the direction and equilibrium of the machine, and it tossed to and fro. Ky-Kâoos would have been cast headlong and killed had he not clung to it. The vultures not being able to disengage themselves, flew an immense way, and at last landed the affrighted monarch in one of the woods of China. Armies marched in every direction to discover and release the sovereign, who, it was believed, had again fallen into the hands of Deevs. He was at last found, and restored to his capital. Roostem, we are told, upbraided his folly, saying

'Have you managed your affairs so well on earth
That you must needs try your hand in those of heaven?'"*

Here the tale of wonder ceased, and a learned dissertation commenced upon the genius and writings of Firdousee. It is only justice to this great poet to observe, that the exuberance of his fertile imagination, though it led him to amplify and adorn his subject, never made him false to the task he had undertaken —that of embodying in his great work all that remained of the fabulous and historical traditions and writings of his country. We cannot have a stronger proof of his adherence to this principle than his passing over, almost in silence, the four centuries which elapsed between the death of Alexander the Great and the rise of Ardesheer or Artaxerxes, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty. Adverting to the history of the Parthian kings, he observes, "When both their root and branches ceased to flourish, their deeds remained unrecorded by any experienced historian; and nothing but their names have I either heard or perused in the annals of the kings of Persia."

* "Too kâr-e-zemeen-râ nikoo sakktee
Kih ber kâr-e-âsmân-neez perdâkhtee."

I mentioned to my friends, as we were leaving the ruins, the reflections which occurred to me on these points, anticipating their approbation of the justice I did Firdousee, but I was disappointed. Mahomed Hoosein, the Indian Moonshee, alone seemed to concur. "It is very just," was pronounced by him in an under tone. Meerza Aga Meer said faintly, "Perhaps you are right." Khan Sahib had a half-suppressed smile at the scrape he saw I was in, from my qualified praise of the popular historian, as well as poet, of Persia; while almost all the natives of that country, and there were many of the party, evidently considered my criticism as bordering on want of faith in an author whom they had almost worshipped from infancy. I overheard Hajee Hoosein, to whom all the lesser persons in the mission listen as to an oracle, whisper to one of his friends, "Sâdee says, 'A wise man does not bring a candle to light the sun.'"

I left Persepolis with regret that my visit was so short; but the same ardent desire to examine this celebrated ruin was not felt by all our party. One of my companions, now no more, a gallant soldier and most devoted sportsman, was induced, by the game he found on the neighbouring plain, to delay his inspection of the palace of Jemsheed to the last day of our stay. On the morning we went to bid farewell to these remains of ancient grandeur, he promised to follow, but never came. When we interrogated him as to the cause, he answered, with that simplicity which belonged to his manly character, "I could not help it: I was on the way, but found a fine duck in the stream that runs from the mountain; it flew in a contrary direction, and I had to follow it several miles before I got a shot. There it is," said he, pointing to the bird which lay beside his gun, in a corner of the tent.

CHAPTER XIII.

Travellers and Antiquaries—Wild Ass—Hawking—Mâder-e-Sûlimân—Akleed—Mirrors—Mehdee Khan—Isfahan—Persian Citizens and Peasantry—Shah Abbas the Great—Hâroon-oor-Rasheed—Nethenz.

THE love of travel, visiting the remains of former grandeur, and of tracing the history of ancient nations, which is so common in Europe, causes wonder in the Asiatics, amongst whom there is little or no spirit of curiosity or speculation. Men who live in ill-governed and unquiet communities can spare no time for such objects from the active occupations incident to their place in society. In better regulated and more settled governments, the state, by divesting men of all immediate care respecting life and property, almost compels those of its subjects whose minds are active, and whose time is at their own disposal, to provide for themselves such a portion of vicissitude and trouble as shall overcome that apathy and inertness into which they might otherwise fall. From these motives they court toil and care, and sometimes danger, to make them relish the feast of existence.

Some gentlemen had accompanied the mission whose chief object was to see Persepolis and other remains of ancient splendour. These motives were unintelligible to the Persians. The day we left the ruins, Aga Meer, as we were riding together, expressed his surprise at men devoting their time to such pursuits. "What can be the use," said he, "of travelling so far and running so many risks to look at ruined houses and palaces, when they might stay so comfortably at home?" I replied, with some feeling of contempt for my friend's love of quiet, "If the state of a man's circumstances, or that of his country, does not find him work, he must find it for himself, or go to sleep and be good for nothing. Antiquaries," I continued, "to whose praiseworthy researches you allude, by directing, through their labours and talents, our attention to the

great names and magnificent monuments of former days, aid in improving the sentiments and taste of a nation. Besides, though no antiquary myself, I must ever admire a study which carries man beyond self. I love those elevating thoughts that lead me to dwell with delight on the past, and to look forward with happy anticipations to the future. We are told by some that such feelings are mere allusions, and the cold practical philosopher may, on the ground of their inutility, desire to remove them from men's minds, to make way for his own machinery; but he could as soon argue me out of my existence as take from me the internal proof which such feelings convey, both as to my origin and destination."

"There goes a Goor-kher" (wild ass), said Mahomed Beg, the Jelloodâr,* who was riding close behind; and away he galloped. Away I galloped also, leaving unfinished one of the finest speeches about the past and the future that was ever commenced.

We pursued the goor-kher several miles, when we gave up the chase as hopeless. On our return, however, we found plenty of other game; five hares were killed by our dogs and three by hawks. When at Shiraz, the Elchee had received a present of a very fine Shâh-Bâz, or royal falcon. Before going out I had been amused at seeing Nutee Beg, our head falconer, a man of great experience in his department, put upon this bird a pair of leathers, which he fitted to its thighs with as much care as if he had been the tailor of a fashionable horseman. I inquired the reason of so unusual a proceeding. "You will learn that," said the consequential master of the hawks, "when you see our sport:" and I was convinced, at the period he predicted, of the old fellow's knowledge of his business.

The first hare seized by the falcon was very strong, and the ground rough. While the bird kept the claws of one foot fastened in the back of its prey, the other was dragged along the ground till it had an opportunity to lay hold of a tuft of grass, by which it was enabled to stop the course of the hare, whose efforts to escape, I do think, would have torn the hawk asunder, if it had not been provided with the leathern defences which have been mentioned.

* Persian groom.

The next time the falcon was flown gave us a proof of that extraordinary courage which its whole appearance, and particularly its eye, denoted. It had stopt and quite disabled the second hare by the first pounce, when two greyhounds, which had been slipped by mistake, came up, and endeavoured to seize it. They were, however, repulsed by the falcon, whose boldness and celerity in attacking the dogs and securing its prey excited our admiration and astonishment.

We had some excellent sport with smaller hawks and partridges. I was particularly pleased with one bird which kept hovering over our heads till the game was sprung, and then descending like a shot, struck its prey to the ground.

We made three marches from Persepolis before we came to any remarkable place; we then reached some ruins called Mâder-e-Sûlimân, or the mother of Solomon. These have been almost as much dwelt upon by travellers as those of Persepolis, and conjectures are equally various. Many insist that this is the tomb of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the wife of David, and mother of Solomon. To this the only objection is, the belief or fact, that neither Solomon nor his mother were ever within a thousand miles of this spot while living, and therefore it was unlikely to be chosen as the burial-place of the latter when dead. Another account states it to be the tomb of Sûlimân, the tenth caliph of the race of Ali; but against this conclusion there is decisive evidence in the very ancient style of the architecture and the inscriptions, which are in the arrow-headed character. Some antiquaries, puzzled by these objections, have gone back to remote ages, and determined it to be Pasargadæ, the resting-place of Cyrus. I could only stay a few hours at this tomb, otherwise this very important question might have been decided.

The next place on our route meriting notice is the village of Akleed, where the first mission halted for some days. It is situated in a beautiful valley, surrounded by hills and watered by clear rivulets. The gardens and groves in this town and its vicinity give it an inviting appearance to a traveller in Persia, which, with the exception of Mazenderan,* and other provinces

* The ancient Hyrcania.

on the Caspian, may generally be described as an arid country, without one great river, and with few perennial streams.*

If the report of the inhabitants of Akleed is to be believed, disease is almost unknown. A man upwards of eighty, who was praising the place to me, said, "We die of old age, but seldom from other causes. Then look round and see what a charming place it is. I have heard a Moollâh assert," he added, "that our town is called Akleed or Kaleed (the key), and, on account of its beauty and salubrity, is considered as a key to paradise."

"But you suffer from oppression like others?" "Why," said he, "we are not exempt from troubles, but these come only now and then, whilst we always enjoy our pleasant habitations. We were in terrible alarm," he continued, "when we first heard of your approach; we were told that the Elchee was carrying a number of pier-glasses of immense† dimensions, as a present to the king; and that the inhabitants of the country, between Abusheher and Shiraz, were not only seized and compelled to carry these mirrors, but that all the principal men in the villages through which they had passed were to be sent to Teheran and punished, because some of them had been broken.

"This you may suppose occasioned no small fright, particularly as we knew the Elchee's Mehmandar would take advantage of the pretext of carrying these presents to commit every species of extortion. You may therefore consider our joy to hear that the Elchee, to save the inhabitants from such sufferings, had resolved to have the mirrors carried by mules. We were, however, not quite relieved from our fears till the whole passed through this place some days ago. Every mirror in its case was like a Tekht-e-Revân (or travelling litter), with shafts before and behind for the mules, by which it was carried. Then, besides twenty or thirty Ferrâshes to take care of these precious glasses, there was a party of horse to protect them; and the Elchee's head carpenter, Randall Beg,‡ dressed

* In Persia the term rood-khâneh, or the bed of a stream, is the common word for a river—an idiom which has probably arisen from the fact stated.

† Some of these mirrors exceeded eight feet in length.

‡ Mr. Randall, who is here alluded to, was a very ingenious carpenter, who had been in an English man-of-war employed in discoveries. He had been in the habit of mixing with the natives of the places he visited and was

like one of us, and with a fine beard, rode at the head of the cavalcade."

The story of the old chronicler of Akleed was perfectly correct; and what was more uncommon in a Persian narration, no way exaggerated. The Elchee, though he incurred considerable expense in providing for the carriage of these unwieldy but valuable articles, acquired more popularity, by the relief he gave to the poorer inhabitants on his route by this act, and by insisting on paying for the Soorât, or provisions furnished to the mission, than by any others during his residence in Persia.

We passed several large camps of Eelyâts in our march between Persepolis and Isfahan. I had formerly seen enough of this race to satisfy me, that even the lowest of them were not only in a condition which freed them from want, but that they enjoyed a consideration in the community, or rather family, to which they belonged, that could not but contribute to their happiness. Their union and their bold character gives to this class of the population of Persia great security; and even when the tribe happens from political motives to be divided, which is often the case, the spirit of individuals remains unbroken; and if they are of a race which has reputation for courage and attachment, it is not unfrequent to see them in the service of those by whom they have been subdued; nor do they in such case conceal the hostile feelings they still cherish against their conquerors, who are usually indifferent to the sentiments they entertain or express, while in their service, trusting for their fidelity to certain ties and principles, which, as connected with personal honour, are seldom violated by men of this description.

These reflections forcibly recurred to my mind, from a conversation I had, the day we left Akleed, with an old soldier of the tribe of Mâaffee, who was in the service of our Mehmandar.

"I have seen," said he to me, "nearly the whole of the contest between the families of Zend and Kajir. I belong to a tribe firmly attached to the former. I fought for them. Our princes were heroes in action, but they wanted judgment; besides fortune deserted them, and favoured these cruel Kajirs." I

on this occasion of great use; for the Persian artizans, employed under his directions, worked with more zeal and readiness, from his dressing like them and living amongst them.

looked round; and observing my surprise, he instantly exclaimed, "What do I care who knows my sentiments? Was ever man more cruel than Aga Mahomed Khan? did not his wanton atrocities exceed all belief? I will tell you one," he added, "that I myself witnessed.

"After the last and bravest of our princes, Lootf Ali Khan, was betrayed and barbarously put to death, his Meerzâ, a respectable Syed of the family of the Prophet, was brought before Aga Mahomed. 'Why did you dare,' said the enraged monarch, 'to write me fermâns?' * 'I did so,' said the Meerzâ, 'because the fear of Lootf Ali Khan, who was near me, was at the moment greater than of you, who were distant; but I trust to your clemency for pardon.' 'Cut off his hands and put out his eyes!' was the savage mandate, which was immediately obeyed.

"Next morning this Meerzâ's son was brought a prisoner to camp. He was sent for by the king, who addressing him, said, 'Go to your father; tell him the Prophet has reproached me for my injustice to him; I will do what I can to make amends: what does he want?' 'To go and pass the remainder of his life at the tomb of the holy Ali at Kerbela,' said the youth. 'Let him depart,' replied the king, 'as soon as his wounds will permit; give him from me these three hundred tomans, and say that horses, mules, and tents will be provided for his accommodation. Inform him, I have repented of my inconsiderate violence, and ask him to pray for me.'

"Now," said my friend, the Mâaffee, "many think Aga Mahomed was sincere in his remorse; but I believe he was only cunning. He saw that every one was shocked at his horrible treatment of a holy Syed, and he was anxious to regain their good opinion. Nobody knew so well as that wily fox how to manage men. But after all," he concluded, "bad as he was in other respects, he was the soldier's friend, and so far better than his nephew and successor."

"Assuredly," said I, "you cannot accuse the present king of cruelty; he appears to me remarkable for his lenity." "What is the use of his lenity, if he neither gives his soldiers money himself, nor allows them to take it from others? These Kajirs,"

* Fermân means a command, signifies here a letter or mandate addressed by a superior to an inferior.

he continued, in no under tone, and with fifty people within hearing, "are a sad set, and we shall never have good times again while they keep the throne."

Next day I spoke privately to this old soldier, and told him I was afraid he might do himself injury by the manner in which he had so openly expressed himself. "Do not be alarmed," he said; "there is now no prince of the the Zend family in Persia to compete for the crown. The Kajirs and their adherents, therefore, take little heed of language that can do no harm; besides, the king is, as you say, a merciful man, and he has the good sense to know he cannot alter the feelings of tribes like ours. He knows, also, that however we may talk, we shall prove true to those we serve, provided we are treated with confidence and consideration."

The first mission had halted at the village of Taaghoon, within a short distance of Isfahan, where we met a chief called Meerzâ Mehdee Khan, who had served under Lord Clive in Bengal. He spoke in raptures of that great man; from whom, as well as from General Carnac and others, he produced testimonials highly honourable to his character. He had retired, with the fortune he made in India, to this, his native village. I was particularly pleased with this old gentleman, and on our second mission, I inquired for him, but regretted to find he had been dead two years. His son had succeeded to his property and situation as head of Taaghoon, and appeared, from his conduct, to have inherited his father's sentiments of regard for the English.

Nothing can exceed in beauty and fertility, the country in the vicinity of Isfahan, and the first appearance of that city is very imposing. All that is noble meets the eye: the groves, avenues, and spreading orchards, with which it abounds, concealing the ruins of this once famed capital. A nearer view, however, dispels the illusion; but still much remains of wealth, if not of splendour, and were I so disposed, I might write a volume on its beautiful environs; its palaces, splendid even in decay, its college, with massy gates of silver, its magnificent bridges, its baths, its arched bazars, its fountains, its far-famed river Zindehrood, and the gardens on its banks, shaded with lofty sycamores, and filled with every flower and fruit of the temperate zone.

When the patience of the reader was exhausted by a minute

description of all the beauties and bounties which art and nature have lavished on Isfahan, there would still remain to be described its two hundred thousand inhabitants, more than half of whom poured forth in their gayest attire to the istikbâl, or meeting with the Elchee, the day we entered this renowned city.

A few days after our arrival the governor gave the Elchee an entertainment, which began, as usual, with sweetmeats and fruit; and after pipes, coffee, tumbling, wrestling, and fireworks, a sumptuous dinner was served up. Another day we were invited to breakfast with my old friend Hajee Ibrahim Kâledoonee, who gave us milk prepared in seventy-two different ways, being, as Hajee Hoosein whispered me, in accordance with the seventy-two sects in the religion of Mahomed. Whether there was such a design or not I cannot say, but the fare was admirable, and I was delighted to find my friend, who is, besides being an extensive farmer, a ketkhûdâ, or magistrate, of the ward of Kâledoon in Isfahan, the same plain-dressed, plain-spoken, humorous person we had left him ten years before. He took us, as he had formerly done, to the wonder of his quarter, the shaking minarets.* When a person mounts to the top of one of these, and moves his body, it vibrates, and the vibration is imparted to the other, though at a distance of about forty feet, the width of the mosque to which they belong.

While my companions were trying this experiment, and wondering at the cause, I remained on the terrace conversing with Hajee Ibrahim. I noticed a small village about a mile distant which seemed deserted. "Is that oppression?" said I. "No," said the Hajee, "worse." "Why," said I, "the Tûrkûmâns cannot have carried their inroads so near the town." "They could not have done the work so complete," said my friend, smiling. "Who has done it?" I asked. "A doctor," replied he; "a proper fellow, who acquired great reputation, and he deserved it, from the heirs of his patients at least. That village literally perished under his hands in five years. Now he is gone I know not where, but good luck attend him, so he comes not again to our neighbourhood."

I went with some of our party to several of the principal

* The minarets of the Mahomedan mosques are, like the steeples of our churches, of all sizes; those we visited were of ordinary dimensions.

hemmâms or baths of Isfahan. That of Khoosroo Aga I think one of the best I have seen. When the first mission came to Persia, doubts were entertained whether we could be permitted this luxury. Fortunately for us the point was deemed one, not merely connected with comfort, but with that respect which it was desirous we should receive from the natives of the country; and viewing it in this light, the Elchee, by a well-timed liberality, converted impure infidels into favoured guests, who, instead of being excluded, were, at every town, solicited to honour with their presence the public baths.

The inhabitants of Isfahan are reputed quick and intelligent. They, like those of other large cities in Persia, differ much, both in appearance and character, from the peasantry who dwell in the villages. The latter, though I saw none in actual poverty, seemed from their appearance rarely to have any superabundance of even the necessaries of life. Though neither so well lodged, clothed, nor fed as the citizens of large towns, and perhaps occasionally subjected to more oppression, I always found, when I talked to them, that they preferred their actual condition; and though often loud and bold in their complaints of their superiors, they appear a cheerful and robust race.*

The food of the Eelyâts is derived principally from their flocks, and they eat, with their cheese and curds, hard black bread made from barley and rye. The villagers in the cultivated plains have less animal food, but more of wheaten bread, fowls, eggs, vegetables, and fruits. Both these classes are equally uninstructed; the wandering tribes despise learning, and the inhabitants of hamlets and villages have seldom an opportunity of acquiring it.

In the larger towns, and particularly those in which there are manufactories, the case is very different; the inhabitants are generally well clothed, and their whole appearance indicates that they live in comfort. There are in all such towns numerous schools, and in the principal ones colleges. At Isfahan almost every man above the very lowest order can read and write, and artisans and shopkeepers are often as familiar as those of the

* I have been informed by one who had personal means of making the comparison, that he considered the general condition of the Persian peasantry to be fully equal if not superior to that of the same class in Russia or Poland.

higher ranks with the works of their favourite poets. The love of such learning seems, in some of the youth of this city, to degenerate into a disease. These Tâlib-ool-Ilm, or seekers of science, as the students are called, may be seen in crowds round the gates, or within the walls of its college, reciting stanzas, or discussing obscure dogmas or doctrines in their works on philosophy or religion, and they often become, from such habits, unfitted for every other pursuit in life.

The population of Isfahan, notwithstanding such exceptions, may be described as an active industrious people. They are considered the best manufacturers and the worst soldiers in Persia. But whatever may be their department in the field of battle, they are remarkable for the boldness of their language in the field of argument, and have great confidence in their ready wit and talent for repartee.

Some years ago, this city was governed by a brother of the celebrated Hajee Ibrahim, whose family at that time held several of the first offices in the kingdom; and I heard that minister tell the Elchee the following anecdote:

A shopkeeper, he said, went to his brother to represent that he could not pay an impost. "You must pay it, like others," said the governor, or leave the city." "Where can I go?" asked the man. "To Shiraz or Cashan." "Your nephew rules the one city, and your brother the other." "Go to the king and complain, if you like." "Your brother the Hajee is prime minister." "Then go to hell," said the enraged governor. "Hajee Merhoom, the pious pilgrim, your father, is dead—" retorted the undaunted Isfahânee. "My friend," said the governor, bursting into a laugh, "I will pay the impost myself, since you declare my family keeps you from all redress, both in this world and the next."

The merchants of Persia form a distinct class. I had now seen those of Abusheher, Shiraz, and Isfahan, and found their general character nearly the same.

So long as they have no concern with state affairs, and accept of no employment from government, they enjoy considerable security. The plunder of a merchant, without some pretext, would shake all confidence, and be fatal to that commerce from which a great proportion of the public revenue is derived; the

most tyrannical monarchs therefore have seldom committed so impolitic an act of injustice. But this class have suffered so severely in the late revolutions of the country that they continue to act with great caution. They are not only very circumspect in their dealings, but, like wary diplomatists, every merchant has a cipher, known only to himself and his correspondents. By this means they receive and convey that intelligence which is essential to give safety to their speculations. Some few make a display of their wealth; but in general their habits are not merely frugal, but penurious. This disposition often increases with age to a degree that would hardly be credited if we had not similar instances in our own country.

The popular impression is so strong on this subject, that they relate the following story as a fact, to exemplify it:

A merchant who had lately died at Isfahan, and left a large sum of money, was so great a niggard, that for many years he denied himself and his son, a young boy, every support, except a crust of coarse bread. He was, however, one day tempted by the description a friend gave of the flavour of cheese to buy a small piece; but before he got home he began to reproach himself with extravagance, and instead of eating the cheese he put it into a bottle, and contented himself, and obliged his child to do the same, with rubbing the crust against the bottle, enjoying the cheese in imagination.

One day that he returned home later than usual, he found his son eating his crust, and rubbing it against the door. "What are you about, you fool?" was his exclamation. "It is dinner-time, father; you have the key, so I could not open the door;—I was rubbing my bread against it, because I could not get to the bottle." "Cannot you go without cheese one day, you luxurious little rascal? you'll never be rich!" added the angry miser, as he kicked the poor boy for not being able to deny himself the ideal gratification.

Our stay at Isfahan was short. I regretted this the less, as I had, on the former mission, full time to trace those remains of the splendour of the Seffavean kings, which are still to be found at this their favourite capital. The names of almost all these monarchs are now forgotten, excepting that of Shah Abbas the Great, who, in Persia, is not only the builder of all bridges,

cârâvânserâis, and palaces, but his name is associated with all good sayings, liberal acts, and deeds of arms. I was really quite tired with hearing of this most gallant, most sage, most witty, and most munificent monarch, at his seat of glory; and when sixty miles to the northward of that city, we were entering the delightful little town of Nethenz, which lies in a narrow valley between two high mountains, I said to myself, "Well, we are now, thank God, clear of Abbas and his grand palaces; this scene of repose abounds in beauties for which he had no taste."

Hajee Hoosein, who was riding near me, said, as if he had read my thoughts, "This is a charming place, and the inhabitants are remarkable for their wit, as well as for their pears, peaches, and pretty ladies. When Abbas the Great"—I pulled up my horse, and looked at him with a countenance that indicated any thing but anxiety for his story; but not observing, or not choosing to observe, he continued:—"When Abbas the Great was hunting in this valley, he met, one morning as the day dawned, an uncommonly ugly man, at the sight of whom his horse started. Being nearly dismounted, and deeming it a bad omen, he called out in a rage to have his head struck off. The poor peasant whom they had seized, and were on the point of executing, prayed that he might be informed of his crime:—'Your crime,' said the king, 'is your unlucky countenance, which is the first object I saw this morning, and which had nearly caused me to fall from my horse.' 'Alas!' said the man, 'by this reckoning, what term must I apply to your majesty's countenance, which was the first object my eyes met this morning, and which is to cause my death?' The king smiled at the wit of the reply, ordered the man to be released, and gave him a present instead of taking off his head."

"Well," said I, when the Hajee had finished, "I am glad I have heard this story, for it proves your Abbas was, with all his fine qualities, a capricious and cruel tyrant." "No doubt he was," said my friend, "like other men in his condition, spoilt by the exercise of despotic power. He had violent bursts of passion, but these were not frequent; and then he used to be very sorry for what he did when in one of his paroxysms; and what more could be expected from a Shâhin-shâh, or king of kings? There," said he, as we entered Nethenz,—"There is an instance

of the truth of what I say; you see that little dome on the summit of the hill which overhangs the town. It is called Goombez-e-Bâz, or the dome of the hawk. It happened one day that this monarch, fatigued with hunting, had sat down on the top of that hill with a favourite hawk on his hand; he called for some water, and a cup was brought from a neighbouring spring; the hawk dashed the cup from the king's hand as he was about to drink; another was sent for, but the bird managed to spill it likewise; a third and a fourth shared the same fate. The monarch, in a rage, killed the hawk. Before he had time to take another cup, one of his attendants noticed that the water was discoloured, This gave rise to suspicions; and the spring was found to have been poisoned with the venom of a snake or some plant. Shah Abbas, inconsolable at his rashness in destroying the bird which had saved his life, built this dome to its memory, and is said to have often visited it."

After hearing this story, I was obliged, lest I should have more anecdotes of this mighty monarch, to confess that, though not a character exactly suited to my notions, there must be some merit in a human being who, in spite of his ordering a man to be slain because he had an ugly face that frightened a horse, and killing a hawk for spilling a cup of water, had contrived to raise his country to such a pitch of prosperity, that he was beloved, as well as feared, when alive, and spoken of for centuries after his decease as the author of all improvements.

The caliph Hâroon-oor-Rasheed occupies the same place in the stories of the Arabians which Shah Abbas does among the Persians; but the "Arabian Nights" have made the English reader familiar with the celebrated Commander of the Faithful, which no similar work has done for the sovereign of Persia. The fame of the latter, even in his native country, has not excluded Hâroon, whom I have always found in works on the wisdom, moderation, and justice of monarchs, to occupy a very prominent place in Persian literature.

Aga Meer brought me one day a small tract, containing an account of a visit of Hâroon to the tomb of Noosheerwân, which was, he said, from the lessons it conveyed, given to the youth of Persia to study. I perused it with pleasure; and shall give a translation of a part of its contents, as a specimen both of the

moral maxims of this country and the mode in which a knowledge of them is imparted.

"The caliph Hâroon-oor-Rasheed," says the author, "went to visit the tomb of the celebrated Noosheerwân, the most famous of all the monarchs who ever governed Persia. Before the tomb was a curtain of gold cloth, which, when Hâroon touched it, fell to pieces. The walls of the tomb were covered with gold and jewels, whose splendour illumined its darkness. The body was placed in a sitting posture on a throne enchased with jewels, and had so much the appearance of life, that, on the first impulse, the Commander of the Faithful bent to the ground, and saluted the remains of the just Noosheerwân.

"Though the face of the departed monarch was like that of a living man, and the whole of the body in a state of preservation, which showed the admirable skill of those who embalmed it; yet when the caliph touched the garments they mouldered into dust. Hâroon upon this took his own rich robes and threw them over the corpse: he also hung up a new curtain richer than that he had destroyed, and perfumed the whole tomb with camphor, and other sweet scents.

"It was remarked that no change was perceptible in the body of Noosheerwân, except that the ears had become white. The whole scene affected the caliph greatly; he burst into tears, and repeated from the Koran—'What I have seen is a warning to those who have eyes.' He observed some writing upon the throne, which he ordered the Moobids,* who were learned in the Pehlevee language, to read and explain. They did so: it was as follows:

'This world remains not; the man who thinks least of it is the wisest.

'Enjoy this world before thou becomest its prey.

'Bestow the same favour on those below thee, as thou desirest to receive from those above thee.

'If thou shouldst conquer the whole world, death will at last conquer thee.

'Be careful that thou are not the dupe of thine own fortune.

'Thou shalt be paid exactly for what thou hast done; no more, no less.'

"The caliph observed a dark ruby-ring on the finger of Noosheerwân, on which was written,

* Moobid is the Persian term for a priest of the fire-worshippers.

'Avoid cruelty, study good, and never be precipitate in action.

'If thou shouldst live for a hundred years, never for one moment forget death.

'Value above all things the society of the wise,'

"Around the right arm of Noosheerwân was a clasp of gold, on which was engraved,

'On a certain year, on the 10th day of the month Erdebehisht,* a caliph of the race of Adean, professing the faith of Mahomed, accompanied by four good men, and one bad, shall visit my tomb.'

"Below this sentence were the names of the forefathers of the caliph. Another prophecy was added concerning Hâroon's pilgrimage to Noosheerwân's tomb.

'This prince will honour me, and do good unto me, though I have no claim upon him; and he will clothe me in a new vest, and besprinkle my tomb with sweet-scented essences, and then depart unto his home. But the bad man who accompanies him shall act treacherously towards me. I pray that God may send one of my race to repay the great favours of the caliph, and to take vengeance on his unworthy companion. There is, under my throne, an inscription, which the caliph must read and contemplate. Its contents will remind him of me, and make him pardon my inability to give him more.'

"The caliph, on hearing this, put his hand under the throne, and found the inscription, which consisted of some lines, inscribed on a ruby as large as the palm of the hand. The Moobids read this also. It contained information where would be found concealed a treasure of gold and arms, with some caskets of rich jewels: under this was written,

'These I give to the caliph in return for the good he has done me; let him take them and be happy.'

"When Hâroon-oor-Rasheed was about to leave the tomb, Hoosein-ben-Sâhil his vizier said to him, 'O lord of the faithful, what is the use of all these precious gems which ornament the abode of the dead, and are of no benefit to the living? Allow me to take some of them.' The caliph replied with indignation, 'Such a wish is more worthy of a thief than of a great or wise man.' Hoosein was ashamed of his speech, and said to the servant who had been placed at the entrance of the tomb, 'Go

* The name of one of the months in the ancient Persian calendar.

thou and worship the holy shrine within.' The man went into the tomb; he was above a hundred years old, but he had never seen such a blaze of wealth. He felt inclined to plunder some of it, but was at first afraid: at last, summoning all his courage, he took a ring from the finger of Noosheerwân, and came away.

"Hâroon saw this man come out, and observing him alarmed, he at once conjectured what he had been doing. Addressing those around him, he said, 'Do not you now see the extent of the knowledge of Noosheerwân? He prophesied that there should be one unworthy man with me; it is this fellow: what have you taken?' said he, in an angry tone. 'Nothing,' said the man. 'Search him,' said the caliph. It was done, and the ring of Noosheerwân was found. This the caliph immediately took, and entering the tomb, replaced it on the cold finger of the deceased monarch. When he returned, a terrible sound, like that of loud thunder, was heard.

"Haroon came down from the mountain on which the tomb stood, and ordered the road to be made inaccessible to future curiosity. He searched for, and found, in the place described, the gold, the arms, and the jewels bequeathed to him by Noosheerwân, and sent them to Bagdad.

"Among the rich articles found was a golden crown, which had five sides, and was richly ornamented with precious stones. On every side a number of admirable lessons were written. The most remarkable were as follows.

First side.

'Give my regards to those who know themselves.

'Consider the end before you begin, and before you advance provide a retreat.

'Give not unnecessary pain to any man, but study the happiness of all.

'Ground not your dignity upon your power to hurt others.'

Second side.

'Take counsel before you commence any measure, and never trust its execution to the inexperienced.

'Sacrifice your property for your life, and your life for your religion.

'Spend your time in establishing a good name; and if you desire fortune, learn contentment.'

Third side.

'Grieve not for that which is broken, stolen, burnt, or lost.

'Never give orders in another man's house; and accustom yourself to eat your bread at your own table.

'Make not yourself the captive of women.'

Fourth side.

'Take not a wife from a bad family, and seat not thyself with those who have no shame.

'Keep thyself at a distance from those who are incorrigible in bad habits, and hold no intercourse with that man who is insensible to kindness.

'Covet not the goods of others.

'Be guarded with monarchs, for they are like fire, which blazeth but destroyeth.

'Be sensible to your own value; estimate justly the worth of others; and war not with those who are far above thee in fortune.'

Fifth side.

'Fear kings, women, and poets.

'Be envious of no man, and habituate not thyself to search after the faults of others.

'Make it a habit to be happy, and avoid being out of temper, or thy life will pass in misery.

'Respect and protect the females of thy family.

'Be not the slave of anger; and in thy contests always leave open the door of conciliation.

'Never let your expenses exceed your income.

'Plant a young tree, or you cannot expect to cut down an old one.

'Stretch your legs no farther than the size of your carpet.'

"The caliph Hâroon-oor-Rasheed was more pleased with the admirable maxims inscribed on this crown than with all the treasures he had found. 'Write these precepts,' he exclaimed, 'in a book, that the faithful may eat of the fruit of wisdom.' When he returned to Bagdad, he related to his favourite vizier, Jaffier Bermekee, and his other chief officers, all that had passed: and the shade of Noorsheerwân was propitiated by the disgrace of Hoosein-ben-Sâhil (who had recommended despoiling his tomb), and the exemplary punishment of the servant who had committed the sacrilegious act of taking the ring from the finger of the departed monarch."

Hâroon-oor-Rasheed, with all his fame for clemency, gene-

rosity, and justice, appears from the very pages written to raise his fame, to have had, like Shah Abbas, his unlucky moments, when all his virtues were obscured by acts of violent and cruel injustice. Witness his putting to death the celebrated vizier, Jaffier Bermekee, and his vain efforts to rob the memory of that virtuous and great minister of his just fame.

Aga Meer related to me, after we had finished our translation, the following story, which I must add, though I hate dwelling long upon any of these eastern characters, however wonderful.

"Hâroon-oor-Rasheed," said the good Meerza, "when he had put to death the celebrated Jaffier Bermekee, not contented with this cruelty, wished to deprive him of those encomiums which the extraordinary virtues of that minister had merited; and he published an order making it death for any of the preachers or public speakers to mention the name of Jaffier. This did not deter an old Arab from descanting with great eloquence on the virtues of the deceased; he was warned of his danger, but despised it; and on being taken and carried to the place of execution, all he asked was to see the caliph for a few minutes. This was granted. The monarch asked him how he came to disregard his laws. 'Had I not praised Jaffier,' said the fearless Arab, 'I should have been a monster of ingratitude, and unworthy the protection of any laws.' 'Why?' said the caliph. 'I came,' replied the Arab, 'poor and friendless to Bagdad. I lodged in a ruin in the skirts of the town, where Jaffier discovered me. Pleased, as he afterwards told me, with my conversation, he paid me frequent visits. One night I was seized and hurried away I knew not whither. In the morning I found myself in a magnificent Hemmâm, and after bathing, was dressed by men in fine robes, who called themselves my slaves. I was then mounted on a horse with costly trappings, and conducted to an elegant palace, where attendants, richly attired, welcomed me as their lord. Recovered from my astonishment, I asked what all this meant. 'The habitation of a Fakeer,'* said I, 'suits me better than this place; not a corner of one of its saloons but is sufficient for my lodging; besides, I could not

* Religious mendicant.

remain happy, even in paradise, if absent from my dear wife and children.' 'Your lordship's family,' said one of the servants, 'are in the inner apartments.' I was conveyed to them, and found their adventures had been similar to mine. They were surrounded by female slaves.

"While we were expressing our mutual astonishment, Jaffier was announced, and I found my old visitor in the ruin, and Jaffier the vizier of the great caliph, one and the same person. I endeavoured to make him change his resolution of raising me to a rank for which I had no desire, and thought my character unsuited: he was however inflexible. 'You conquered me in an argument,' said he, 'on happiness being increased with the increased power a virtuous man possesses of doing good. You shall now have an opportunity of putting in practice all those plans of beneficence to others which have hitherto only employed your imagination.' 'I have ever since,' said the Arab, 'lived in affluence; my friendship with Jaffier only ended with his life: to him I owe all I possess; and was it possible for me to be deterred by death itself from doing justice to his memory?'

"Though the caliph's pride was hurt, he could not withhold his esteem from a man of such courageous virtue. Instead of ordering him to be executed, he endeavoured to gain his admiration by more splendid generosity than Jaffier. 'Take that,' said he, giving him his sceptre, which was virgin gold, studded with rich jewels. 'I take it,' said the grateful and undaunted Arab; 'but this, also, commander of the faithful, is from Bermekee.'"

Before quitting Nethenz I accompanied the Elchee in a ride through its streets and gardens, which are so intermingled as to give it a singular and pleasing appearance: you can scarcely tell whether you are in the town or the country. We saw plenty of the pears and peaches, for which my friend told me it was famous. As to its pretty ladies, they saw us, no doubt, through the trellis-work of their dark veils, while we could only dwell upon their beauties with the eyes of our imagination.

I complained to my friend, Khan Sahib, of the privation of the innocent pleasure of gazing upon the features of a lovely

female; and then I added, "What a mortification must it be for the lady to have her charms denied that tribute of admiration which is their due!" "True," answered my little friend; "it is very hard upon a few, but then think how much numbers owe to that veil, which conceals age and ugliness, as well as youth and beauty. I once," he observed, "fell violently in love with one of these veiled ladies, whom I saw sometimes at a window, and sometimes gliding like a phantom through the streets. She continued, for a month, to occupy all my waking thoughts, and the image of her beauties disturbed my rest. I first cast love-tokens into her windows, in the shape of nosegays; then I persuaded an old woman to pour out all the raptures of my soul at the feet of the object of my devotion. To make a long story short, I was at last promised an interview. I waited with impatience for the moment of anticipated delight. When admitted into the presence of my fair I became wild with joy; I praised her shape, the sweetness of her melodious voice, the captivating graces of her manner, and, above all, her beautiful face. She long resisted my entreaties to remove her veil. This I deplored in the words of Hâfiz, Maulana Rumi ✻ exclaiming,

'O alas!* O alas! and O alas! that such a moon should be concealed behind a cloud.'

"What with prose, poetry, and flattery," added Khan Sahib, "I succeeded at last. Would to God I had not! but perhaps it has done me good; for what I saw of my imaginary angel has reconciled me for life to veils and clouds."

As we were talking we arrived at a citadel which was the residence of the old Hâkim, or governor Hajee Abd-ool-Câsim, to whom the Elchee paid a visit. We were received in a room at the top of one of the highest turrets, from whence we had a commanding view of the surrounding scenery. Nothing could be more singular or beautiful. The valley of Nethenz, which is inclosed by mountains, is itself a succession of eminences and small hills. The fruitful gardens, which occupied every spot

* Ei dereeghâ, ei dereeghâ, oo ei dereegh! kih hem-choo mâh pinhân shoodzeer-e-meegh.

✻ Jelaludin, Maulana Rumi.

where there were no houses, extended eight miles. Seldom above one, and never more than two of these gardens, were upon the same level; they either appeared in a circle, converging towards the common centre of an eminence that rose above the others, or were seen sloping in flights along the hills that bordered upon the mountains. Rows of lofty sycamores and spreading walnuts marked the lines of the streets and the divisions of the gardens; and the latter were fenced round with thick mulberry hedges, whose leaves, the Hâkim informed us, fed innumerable silk-worms, the produce of which formed the finest of the silk manufactured at the cities of Cashan and Isfahan.

The sun was shining bright as we gazed upon this enchanting scene, and its beauty was greatly increased by numerous clear streams, which, pouring from the neighbouring hills, either flowed or were conducted among the gardens and orchards, where they appeared lost, till seen glistening through those parts where the foliage was lighter or wholly removed.

The Elchee was quite delighted with the prospect. After remaining for some time abstracted in contemplating its beauties, he turned round to the governor, and with assumed gravity proposed to change stations with him. "I should," said the old Hajee, with a faint smile, "make a bad Elchee; and the pleasure you have enjoyed in looking at this town from that window is the greatest you would ever know if you were its Hâkim." When making this last observation, he shook his head in a manner too plainly indicating that the scene of abundance with which he was surrounded, was to him the source of more trouble than enjoyment.

I mentioned my suspicions to my friend Hajee Hoosein, as he came to me with an evening kelliân. "Ah!" said he, imitating the exclamation of his countrymen on entering the charming vale of Desht-e-Arjun, "Irân hemeen-est! Irân hemeen-est! This is Persia! this is Persia! But God is just, as Sâdee says: he gives fertile fields, roses, and nightingales, with wicked men, to one country, and deserts and screech-owls, with righteous men, to another; and again he tells us, 'It is not the silk-worm but he that wears the silk vest that is to be envied.'"

I was quite satisfied with the meaning and moral of my friend's

quotations, though I confess I have looked in vain over the pages of Sâdee to discover them in his volumes. But the Hajee, like many of his countrymen, has such a deference for that inimitable author, that he ascribes all sentiments that appear just to him, as the sole source of human wisdom.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cashan—Scorpions—Cashanee Youth—Village of Sinsin—Plundering Expeditions of the Tûrkûmâns—Account of that Tribe—Wandering Tribes—Visit to the Dwelling of Mihrâb Khan Afshâr—Account of his Family and Adherents—Anecdote of Kerreem Khan.

CASHAN, to which we went from Nethenz, is situated on the verge of a desert, and no city can present a more uninviting aspect. We were, however, accommodated in the Bâgh-e-Fin, an excellent house and garden, through which there is a clear stream, which, while it refreshes the latter, gives an ample supply of water to the marble-baths belonging to the small but delightful royal residence.

"May you be stung by a scorpion of Cashan," is a common malediction in Persia; and all are agreed that this city is famous for producing the largest and most venemous species of this reptile. We were however assured, that, partaking of that spirit of hospitality which distinguishes the Persian nation, they never sting a stranger.

"This fact," said Agar Meer to me, "is asserted by Ameen Râzee, a respectable writer, and the author of a famous work called the Heft Akleem, or 'Seven Climates.'" "The same respectable writer," said Khan Sâhib, "compares the mud houses and narrow streets of Cashan, to the angelic cheeks of the resplendent Hoorees of Paradise, whose smiles are promised to the faithful. I could almost wish," he added, "to be stung by one of his scorpions, that my mind might be satisfied there was no truth in his comparison; otherwise my dreams of futurity will never be realised."

Agar Meer, who disliked wit when it ridiculed religion, gravely replied to this sally, "Ameen Râzee's facts may be correct.

though his metaphors are extravagant." "That may be true," said my Hindustânnee friend, Mahomed Hoosein, "but, according to the fable of the scorpion and tortoise, the former has no power over his nature."

"I have read," said the good Moonshee, "that a tortoise and a scorpion travelled the same road for a considerable distance in good fellowship. The latter, on the ground of this new friendship, asked the former to carry him over a deep stream. The tortoise complied; but what was his surprise to find his companion endeavouring with all his might to sting him! When he had placed him safe on the opposite shore, he turned to him and said, 'Are not you the most wicked and ungrateful of reptiles? But for me you must either have given up your journey, or have been drowned in that stream, and what is my reward? If it had not been for the armour which God has given me, I should have been stung to death.' 'Blame me not,' said the scorpion, in a supplicatory tone, 'it is not my fault; it is that of my nature; it is a constitutional habit * I have of stinging!'"

"Now," said Mahomed Hoosein, not wishing to offend his brother of the pen, "this fable certainly applies to scorpions in general; those of Cashan may be different: they may have that regard for strangers which Aga Meer has stated them to have, on the authority of Ameen Râzee." "It may be so," † I remarked; and this phrase of doubtful assent put an end (as in Persia it is always meant to do) to all further discussion on the subject.

We left Cashan without any of our party being stung, which is a negative proof in favour of Ameen Râzee and other authors who have eulogized its scorpions; but the point cannot yet be considered as determined. It will no doubt therefore continue to receive, as it has hitherto, the attention of all travellers who possess learning, and are curious in their research after facts of natural history.

The inhabitants of Cashan, like those of Isfahan, are more celebrated as silk weavers than warriors. When Nadir Shah returned from India he published a proclamation, permitting the followers of his army to return to their homes. It is narrated

* Neeyet-e-naish zedden. † Boodeh-bâshed.

that thirty thousand of those who belonged to Cashan and Isfahan applied to this monarch for a guard of a hundred musketeers to escort them safe to their wives and children. "Cowards!" exclaimed he, in a fury; "Would I were a robber again for the sake of waylaying and plundering you all. Is not my success a miracle," said he to those around him, "with such a set of dastards in my camp!"

This story and many others were told us as we were sitting in one of the cool rooms of the palace of Fin, commenting on the qualities of the Câshânees.

My old friend Mahomed Shereef Khan Burgshattee told me he had once a convincing proof that a Câshânee might be a brave man. "On returning," said he, "from the pursuit of a small party of plundering Tûrkûmâns, I found that ten of my men had surrounded a fine looking youth, who was on a dry spot in a morass, where not more than two could approach him at a time. He had only a sword and a spear, but refused to yield; inviting his opponents to use their fire-arms, since they durst not fight him on equal terms. Struck with his appearance and courage, I solicited him to surrender, and assured him he should be well treated. 'I know better,' said he, 'than to regard the promises of a faithless Persian, who the moment I was unarmed would maltreat and murder me.' I ordered my men to withdraw to a distance, and after making a vow he should be well used, and leaving my arms on the ground, I rode forward, saying, 'I will confide in you, though you dare not trust me.' The youth, subdued by this action, sprung from his horse, threw down his spear and sword, and hastened to kiss my stirrup; offering at the same time his services, which I accepted.

"I desired him to remount," continued Mahomed Shereef Khan, "and we rejoined my astonished followers. After complimenting him on his courage, I asked where he was born? 'At Cashan,' he said. 'You a Câshânee!' I replied with surprise. 'I am,' said he; 'my father was a silk weaver, and I had just begun to learn his business, being about twelve years of age, when having gone with some companions to amuse ourselves at a distance from the town, we were surprised and carried off by a party of Tûrkûmâns. I was adopted into the family of one of their chiefs, who carefully instructed me in horsemanship and

the use of arms. I have ever since accompanied him in his plundering incursions into Persia and other countries.'

"Now," said the old Mehmandar, "this man continued twenty years with me; he only died about a twelvemonth ago, and maintained till the day of his death the character he had established at our first meeting. This example," he concluded, "satisfies me that it is possible the son of a weaver, if properly brought up, may be a brave man. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt these silk manufactories give bad habits, and spoil many a good soldier."

Our first march from Cashan was to the câravânserâi of Sinsin. We found the village, which had been very flourishing thirty years ago, a complete ruin, with only a few inhabitants. Amongst these was an old man, who gave me an account of the incursions of parties of savage Tûrkûmâns, who year after year laid waste their fields, plundered their dwellings, and carried their wives and children into slavery.

I asked him if no means had been taken to prevent these inroads. "Alas!" said he, "our own country, at the period of which I speak, was in too distracted a state to admit of any such precautions, and we were too weak to defend ourselves against such daring and ferocious men. Besides, they came and vanished in a moment. Thirty or forty mounted robbers and twenty led horses used to surprise us at daylight: all the spoil they could carry, together with women and children, were fastened on the led horses, and in an hour or two they were in full march to their homes, on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea.'

"If we attempted resistance," continued the narrator of this sad tale, "as we sometimes did, they became furious; our houses were burnt, the old and helpless massacred, and all the property they could not bear away was destroyed. Look here," said he, pointing to some scars, "Look at these; I got them in attempting to save my little brother and two sisters from the merciless grasp of these ruthless spoilers. I was left for dead, while my poor father, who was wounded also, had only sufficient life left to reach Cashan, where he expired, after giving intelligence of our fate. Some horsemen were sent in pursuit, but their pampered animals, kept to parade in squares and market-places, could never overtake the trained horses of the plunderers,

who used to come two hundred fersekhs* and return in ten days.

"But, thank God," he concluded, "if the Kajirs who now fill the throne of Persia have done us no other good, it is no slight blessing to be freed from the ravages of these terrible Yamoots; that is the name of the tribe who made the inroads upon us. They dwell in the plains near Astrabad, and are friends of our royal family, who are natives of that place: besides, now that Persia is settled, they find there is more profit, and less danger, in breeding and selling horses, than in plundering and murdering their neighbours."

I had ten years before seen a good deal of some Tûrkûmâns at Teheran. Their character, and what I learnt of their habits, quite prepared me to believe the melancholy tale which was told me by the old villager, towards whom I showed a sympathy that surprised him; for scenes like these are so common in Persia, that they attract little attention. The fact is, the Tûrkûmâns are only a shade more savage than those tribes of Persian and Tartar origin, who form the military class of this nation, and who, though restrained in some degree of order, when the government is strong, cherish their lawless habits, and are ready at a moment to show them, when invited to do so, by the weakness or distraction of the state.

The Tûrkûmâns† have long been familiar to Persian history as depredators. This race of Tartars has small eyes, high cheek bones, thin beards, and robust frames. The women, though with softer features, and some with good complexions, are seldom beauties; and they are generally more valued for their capability of enduring fatigue, and for giving birth to, and bringing up

* The standard fersekh of Persia is 6000 royal yards (gez-e-shâh), which is somewhat more than three miles and a half. This measure, however, varies in different provinces of that kingdom.

† Many Persian authors assert that the word Tûrkûmân is from the compound term Tûrk-mânend, or Turk-like; and the conclusion made from this is, that they are a tribe of Tartars who, having become inhabitants of the north-eastern part of Persia, were subsequently designated by a name which marked their origin. Persian writers, however, are generally bad etymologists, and I am a worse; I must, therefore, leave this important question in doubt.

stout children, than for any of those charms and accomplishments which are so highly prized in more civilized society.

During the last century the limits of Persia have been more confined than formerly, and these Tûrkûmân tribes may now be considered more as borderers to that country than as forming part of its population. They appear indeed to have cultivated and fostered all the qualities which might be expected to belong to a race so situated, and have become, in virtue of usage, entitled alternately to claim the privilege of being protected by, or the right of plundering, the kingdoms they divide.

The Tûrkûmâns trace their descent to the great Moghul monarch Aghooz Khan, the son of Kara Khan, the son of Moghul Khan, the son of the Lord knows who. Their great progenitor was famous for his five sons, his bow, and his three golden arrows! At his death he divided the bow, which is the type of power, between the two elder, to whom he consigned his great empire. To each of the three younger he gave an arrow, signifying by that bequest that they and their descendants were to obey their elder brethren; to be chiefs, generals, and embassadors, and to fly at command, as an arrow when directed from the bow. The Tûrkûmâns belong to one of the junior branches of this great family, but they have not hitherto been remarkable for any of the dispositions or qualities likely to render them useful or obedient servants.

I had the account of their origin, as well as many other facts connected with their history, from an old Tûrkûmân called Rahmân Beg, of whom I bought some horses. A short anecdote will give his character. I was anxious to buy a very fine animal he had, but I delayed the purchase from an objection to his head, which was large and ugly. One day as I was commenting on this unsightly member, my friend lost all patience, "What the devil," said he, "do they ride on the head of a horse in your country, that you are so particular as to to its size and beauty?"

This rude, but intelligent barbarian, though he could neither read nor write, and had the utmost contempt for Moollâhs (a term which, with him, included all priests and scholars), was as familiar with the history of his own tribe as Mirkhond, or any of the best Eastern historians.

"You have, no doubt," said he to me, "read of the famous

Seljûkian Prince Sanjar. That sovereign, not content with an annual tribute of twenty-four thousand sheep which we gave him, wanted to increase the number, and to send one of his own officers to choose from our flocks, instead of trusting to the honour of our chiefs. This we could never put up with; so we fought him, destroyed his army, and took him prisoner. He was for some years set upon a throne every day, and confined in a cage every night; but at last he made his escape; and being a soft-hearted, foolish blockhead, died of grief, from seeing the state of desolation to which we had reduced his favourite province of Khorassan! After this," continued he, "we became the terror of the world, and the name of Tûrkûmân, which had long been despised, was dreaded everywhere. Who has not heard," said he exultingly, "of our princes and chiefs who subdued kingdoms, and plundered empires, under the glorious banners of the white and the black sheep? But these days of sovereignty did not last long; we separated, and have never since done any thing worthy of mention. The tribe of Yamoot," continued my old friend, "to which I belong, remained long unsubdued, and made famous annual inroads into Persia; but the late king, Aga Mahomed Khan, who was a cruel, wily, old rogue, spoiled all that sport. Being well acquainted with our haunts, he made a sudden incursion into our country, slew numbers, and brought away many captives, the majority of whom were women and children."

"The possession of our families," said Rahmân Beg, as he concluded this short history of his tribe, "compelled our chiefs to enter into a compact not to plunder, and they have been obliged to give their children as hostages for its faithful performance. The present king has improved upon the policy of his uncle: a colony of our tribe is established at Teheran; some are in service, and the others, though strictly watched, are permitted to trade. If matters go on in this way our sons will become a set of blackguard horsedealers, instead of gallant warriors, and their children will be instructed in the art of cheating unwary citizens, instead of the more manly occupation of plundering a rich traveller. We shall have no more fine Persian girls to keep our tents clean, and dress our victuals, nor active fellows to rub our horses, or attend our flocks! What a sad

change! And as to our profits in breeding and selling horses, I have known more money given in one day for the ransom of a nobleman or a wealthy merchant, than our whole tribe can now make by trafficking in cattle for a twelvemonth!"

I asked Rahmân Beg, how he, as a Mahomedan, could reconcile himself to make slaves of persons of the same religion? "What," said he, "do you count these rascally Sheâhs, the Persians, who deny the first four Caliphs, to be of the same religion as we Soonees?—they are vile schismatics." "Then," I observed, "when you made Soonees captives, you did not make them slaves?" "Why! I don't know; I think," he added, laughing, "we should in such case have been compelled to become Sheâhs ourselves; for slaves we must have."

The Tûrkûmâns, of whom Rahmân Beg is a fair specimen, pay little if any regard to religion beyond a few ceremonies. The rites observed at their births, funerals, and marriages, are not essentially different from those of the other wandering tribes in Persia. The courage of this tribe is proverbial, and both the Persians and Afghâns admit their extraordinary prowess. They use bows and arrows, and some few have fire-arms, but the weapon on which they place most dependence is the spear. This is in general from ten to twelve feet long, rudely formed, and with a short piece of steel at the point.

As we were one day looking at a party of the king's guards,* each of whom was armed with a sword, a spear, a pair of pistols, and a dagger, Rahmân Beg tossed up his head in contempt, exclaiming, "What is the good of all that arsenal? what can a soldier want beyond a spear and a heart?"†

The Tûrkûmâns are fond of music and dancing. The celebrated song of "Koor Ogloo," or The Son of the Blind Man, is chanted when they go to battle, and is said to have a wonderful effect in exciting the courage of this rude race. I asked Rahmân Beg to give me a copy of this song; he could not, but gave me its general purport, and repeated some lines with great animation.

The burthen of the song is the wonderful deeds of the son of a poor blind old man, who employed himself in plundering

* Gholam-e-Shâh.

† Een kârkhâneh cheh fâideh; berâe sipâhee cheh zeroor sewâe neezeh wa dil?

travellers and caravans, while his father dwelt in the recesses of a wood which lay between two great cities. The prowess of the single arm of the "Son of the blind man" was so great, that hundreds could not withstand it; and when thousands were sent against him, his fleet horse Kerât carried him to a place of security.

The praises of the hero and his horse, the prodigies of valour of the one, the wonderful fleetness of the other, with the descriptions of rich plunder, and beautiful damsels, which abound throughout this song, are quite congenial to the habits of a Tûrkûmân; and I could believe all the feelings, that I was told its recitation produced, from the effect the mere account of it that he gave me had on Rahmân Beg. "Others of the Tartar blood," said my old friend, "admire this fine composition; but a set of fellows who live as they do, are not worthy of such verses; and we also," he added, "if we go on as we are now doing, shall soon be ashamed to hear them sung by our minstrels; who may well cherish these old strains, for we no longer supply them with deeds for new songs of battle!"

I was very anxious to learn all I could of the breed and management of the Tûrkûmân horses, which are so highly valued in Persia. They are of good size, being from fifteen to sixteen hands high, of excellent temper, and of a shape, like that of the highest bred English carriage-horses, lengthy and strong limbed; and often showing a great deal of blood.

The Tûrkûmâns trace all their best horses to Arabian sires; and they believe that the race degenerates, after three or four descents, unless it is, what they term, "refreshed." This makes them most anxious to obtain fine Arabian horses. Rahmân Beg and his brother offered the Elchee a large sum for a very fine animal he had brought from Abusheher, and they seemed greatly disappointed that he would not part with him.

The size of the horses is attributed to the fine pasture lands on which they are reared; and the extraordinary capability of bearing fatigue to their blood, and the manner in which they are trained. They ride them with snaffles, and allow them to go slouching along with their necks loose. They speak with contempt of horsemen who rein up their horses, and throw them on their haunches. "It is taking the animal," said

Rahmân Beg to me, "off his natural position; and for what? to get a little readiness* in the plain; and for this power of skirmishing, you hurt, if you do not altogether lose, the long walk, trot, and gallop, to which we trust in our forays!"†

These plunderers train their horses, as much as we do our racers or hunters. Before they begin their expeditions, they put them into complete condition, and the marches they perform are astonishing. According to their own accounts, some have gone forty fersekhs (140 miles) within twenty-four hours; and it was ascertained on most minute inquiry, that parties of them, in their predatory inroads, were in the habit of marching from twenty to thirty fersekhs (from 70 to 105 miles) for twelve or fifteen days together, without a halt.

Before proceeding on a foray they knead a number of small hard balls of barley-meal, which, when wanted, they soak in water, and this serves as food to both themselves and their horses. It is a frequent practice with them in crossing deserts, where no water is to be found, to open a vein in the shoulder of the horse, and to drink a little of his blood; which, according to their opinion, benefits, rather than injures the animal, while it refreshes the rider. On my appearing to doubt this fact, Rahmân Beg showed me several old horses, on which there were numerous marks of having been bled; and he assured me they never had recourse to phlebotomy but on such occasions as have been stated.

The Eelyâts, or wandering tribes in Persia, are like the Tûrkûmâns, but somewhat less barbarous. They have been often described, and one good picture of this race serves for all, for they are little subject to change; and while every tradition and every work on the ancient history of Persia proves that many of its more southern inhabitants, particularly those of the mountains of Kerman and Lauristan, have been nomades, or wandering tribes, from time immemorial, we find in the Turkish Eelyâts who have overrun the northern provinces, the language, the habits, and the appearance of the Tartar race to which they belong.

The qualities most prized amongst these tribes are courage in men, and chastity in women. The females who dwell in tents wear no veils. They welcome strangers, are very hospitable,

* Hâzir mydânee. † Chappau.

and their manner, though confident, is by no means immodest. The Elchee on his return from the first mission, when riding one day near a small encampment of Afshâr families, expressed doubts to his mehmandar, a Persian nobleman, as to the reported boldness and skill in horsemanship of their females. The mehmandar immediately called to a young woman of handsome appearance, and asked her in Turkish if she was a soldier's daughter? She said she was. "And you expect to be a mother of soldiers," was the next observation. She smiled. "Mount that horse," said he, pointing to one with a bridle, but without a saddle, "and show this European Elchee the difference between a girl of a tribe and a citizen's daughter." She instantly sprung upon the animal, and setting off at full speed, did not stop till she had reached the summit of a small hill in the vicinity, which was covered with loose stones. When there, she waved her hand over her head, and came down the hill at the same rate at which she had ascended it. Nothing could be more dangerous than the ground over which she galloped; but she appeared quite fearless, and seemed delighted at having an opportunity of vindicating the females of her tribe from the reproach of being like the ladies of cities.*

The wives and daughters of the chiefs, who accompany their relations to cities and towns, have in some degree adopted the customs of citizens; but neither such changes of manners in the ladies, nor the habits acquired by the men, are suffered to dissolve their ties with followers, whose devoted attachment and readiness to adopt their cause, or to revenge their death, constitute their strength and safeguard, amidst all the hazards with which they are surrounded.

The habits and sentiments of this class of people interested me exceedingly; and my anxiety to observe as much as I could of their domestic arrangements, made me delighted on hearing that the Elchee intended a visit to the house of his mehmandar, Mihrâb Khan Afshâr, a man of high family, and who holds an office at court.

The day before we arrived at his house I met him on the march, having a letter in his hand, with the contents of which he appeared highly offended. "I hope you have no unpleasant

* History of Persia, vol. ii. p. 115.

news," I said. "Nothing," was his reply; "except that I am directed in this mandate from his majesty's minister, to be most careful in protecting the villages and grounds we have to pass, and not take a blade of grass from them. The chief of the tribe to which these lands belong," he added in a rage, "has obtained this order. The scoundrel! But this is another item to the account which I shall some day settle with compound interest."

"You must know," said Mihrâb Khan, seeing I did not quite comprehend him, "this tribe and mine have a long-continued feud. Our lands adjoin; the government is too strong at present to admit of attacking each other openly like brave men; so we endeavour, like sneaking rascals, to do each other all the mischief we can by intrigues and plots at court. They are at present in great favour, and have recently obtained the transfer of a small tribe, whose tents you have just passed, and who were formerly our peasants." "Who are these peasants?" I asked. "Oh," said the Turkish chief, "they belong to one of the old Persian tribes, which it is the policy of the king to break, and so he parcels them amongst us Turks; but that has nothing to do with his taking them from us, and giving them to our enemies."

During this conversation we had reached the summit of an eminence, from which Mihrâb Khan, his eyes glistening with joy, pointed out the ruins of a village. "Look there," said he, "it is twenty-five years since I accompanied my uncle Hâshem Khan to an attack of that village; we completely sacked and destroyed it. The rascals had no Shâhin-Shâh (king of kings) to protect them then. But there is one consolation, these stupid times cannot last for ever; and if I live long enough to give these vagabonds another sound drubbing, I shall die contented!"

The morning after this conversation, we arrived at the fort of Hashem,* a name given to this castle, after the founder, the uncle of our mehmandar. We were met by four nephews of the latter, several of his relations, a troop of his followers, and his little son Shâhverdee, who, though only eight years of age, paid his compliments to the Elchee in a most formal style, and managed with great address a large and spirited horse.

When we entered the fort, we found it completely dismantled,

* Kella-e-Hâshem-Khan.

and two of the bastions thrown down. This was done, we were informed, by the jealousy of the king, who disapproved of his nobles having strongholds.

We had no sooner finished a very plentiful breakfast, than our host retired to his inner apartment, and returned, leading in his hand a stout, chubby, red-cheeked boy, between three and four years of age. Of this little fellow, he seemed very proud; there could not be a finer child: he, also, was well trained, and made his obeisance to the Elchee, like a high bred young gentleman, and took his seat near his father. We however managed, though not without some difficulty, to discompose his gravity, and soon discovered, that he was, as his father had described him, a proper Young Pickle.

In introducing me to his relations Mihrâb Khan gave me a short history of his family. "My father," said he, "had two brothers, one older and one younger than himself. Here (pointing to them) are four young men, the grandsons of my eldest uncle, who was head of the family. Their eldest brother is with the king, commanding a body of horse, all of the tribe of Afshâr, and this (turning to an elderly person) is my cousin, the son of my younger uncle.

"My family," said the Khan, "consists of six children, of whom you have seen two: they are all (except one) by the same mother, my wife, the daughter of Fatteh Ali Khan Afshâr, a famous chief, who, on the death of Nadir Shah (whom you know was of our tribe) aspired to the throne. My good father-in-law, however, lost his life in the attempt to become a king, and I married his orphan daughter, an excellent woman, but who carries her head rather high, as no doubt she has a right to do, from recollection of her father's pretensions! Look!" said he, speaking softly, for the apartment we were in was within hearing of the interior; "look at that youngster at the other end of the room: he is my son. His mother was the daughter of a jeweller at Isfahan, an uncommonly pretty girl. He is a fine lad, but I dare hardly notice him; and he is, you will observe, not allowed to sit within ten yards of the grandsons of Fatteh Ali Khan Afshâr! This is all very proper," he added; "it is attention to the dam, as well as the sire, that keeps the breed good. Besides, the influence of females amongst us Eelyâts is very

great, and if we did not treat them with respect, matters would not long be right."

Mihrâb Khan next gave me an account of the mode in which their family lands were allotted, and how the disbursements of the respective branches of the family were made. "My father and his brothers lived together," said he, "and we do the same. Our inheritance was equal, and each of the three branches is charged a day's expenditure, successively. Entertainments and imposts are paid in equal shares. We seek by intermarriages to strengthen those ties, which are our only defence against oppression and destruction.

"We are Turks," he concluded, laughing, "and consequently, you may suppose, have often violent quarrels, but the necessity of our condition soon reconciles us again; and we are at present, and will I trust long continue, an united family!"

I remarked in the followers of Mihrâb Khan, as I had done in other tribes, an attachment to their chief approaching to a perfect devotion. It was a love and duty, of inheritance, strengthened by the feelings of twenty generations. Though the superior in general repaid this feeling with regard and protection, I saw many instances of its being considered as much a property as the land, and the inanimate goods and chattels, which he who received it had inherited from his father.

There are few countries which can boast of more examples of devoted allegiance of chiefs to their sovereign, as well as of followers to their chiefs, than Persia: but this will not recommend them to many of my readers. We live in a refined and artificial age, and, vain of our condition, we laugh to scorn feelings which were the pride of our ancestors, and which at this moment form the only ties that preserve order over nine-tenths of the universe.

Allegiance of any description is, according to some philosophers, a folly if not a crime, and quite beneath the dignity of human beings. Others admit that from being a cherished prejudice, it may in some cases have a salutary action; but those who view man as formed by his Creator, and who contemplate the origin of those motives by which he is actuated, will find that the feeling of dependence with which allegiance is associated, and which in the silence of reason often leads to a line of action beneficial to the community as well as the individual, is not the

less valuable from being grafted on his weakness; a part of his nature, by the by, requiring much more the care and attention of philosophers than his strength, for that can take care of itself.

Allegiance is the duty a child owes to its parent, for birth, nourishment, and protection. It is that which collected families owe to a chief of their tribe, who is their point of union, and consequently of their security; and in its climax it is that which chiefs and their followers owe to a sovereign, their concentrated attachment to whom is the ground of their safety and their glory as a nation. This feeling gains strength by becoming hereditary. It is associated with the fame of individuals, of families, of tribes, and of empires; it is conservative, it is destructive; but even in its most dreadful action it has in it an ennobling principle, for it is congenial with the most natural, as well as the highest and noblest feelings of the human mind.

The wandering tribes in Persia are not more remarkable for attachment to their chiefs than for the affection relations bear to each other, and the strength of those ties by which every individual is bound to the community of which he is a part.

A Persian friend of mine related to me in illustration of this fact, an authentic and affecting anecdote of the conduct of an old man of one of those tribes during the reign of Kerreem Khan Zend.

Twelve men had been robbed and murdered under the walls of Shiraz. The perpetrators of this atrocious act could not for a long period be discovered, but Kerreem Khan deeming this occurrence so deeply injurious to that impression of security and justice which it was the labour of his life to establish, commanded the officers of justice to persevere in their search till the offenders were detected, threatening them, and others who had heard the cries of the murdered men with vengeance, unless they effected a discovery, which he considered essential to his own reputation.

After some months had elapsed, it was discovered by accident that a small branch of Kerreem Khan's own tribe of Zend, at that time encamped near Shiraz, were the murderers. Their guilt was clearly proved, and all who had been actually engaged in the murder were sentenced to death. Powerful intercession was made that some at least should be pardoned, but the prince

had vowed that every man should suffer, and their being of his own favoured tribe made him more inexorable. They had, he said, brought disgrace on him as their sovereign and as their chief, and could not be forgiven.

When the prisoners were brought before him to receive sentence, there was amongst them a youth of twenty years of age, whose appearance interested every spectator; but their anxiety was increased to pain when they saw the father of this young man rush forward, and demand, before they proceeded to the execution, to speak to the prince. Permission was granted, and he addressed him as follows:

"Kerreem Khan, you have sworn that these guilty men shall die, and it is just; but I, who am not guilty, come here to demand a boon of my chief. My son is young, he has been deluded into crime; his life is forfeited, but he has hardly tasted the sweets of life; he is just betrothed in marriage; I come to die in his stead: be merciful! let an old worn out old man perish, and spare a youth, who may long be useful to his tribe; let him live to drink of the waters, and till the ground of his ancestors!"

Kerreem Khan is stated to have been greatly moved by the old man's appeal: he could not pardon the offence, having sworn on the Koran that all concerned should be put to death; and with feelings very different from our ideas of justice, but congenial to those of the chief of a tribe, he granted the father's prayer, and the old man went exultingly to meet his fate. While all around were filled with pity, his son, wild and distracted with grief, was loud in imploring the prince to reverse his decree, to inflict on him that death which he merited, and to save the more valuable life of his aged, devoted, and innocent parent.

CHAPTER XV.

Arrival at Koom—Mahomedan Ladies—Their Rights and Privileges after Marriage—Divorces—Story of Hajee Sâlah, the Cross-Grained.

We went from Cashan to Koom, a very ancient and once populous city, but the greater part of it is now in ruins. Several of the Seffavean monarchs, and many celebrated and pious persons are interred at this place; but notwithstanding the tombs of learned priests and great monarchs, with which it is honoured, its present fame and sanctity are chiefly derived from its containing the mortal remains of Fatima the Immaculate,* who was the sister of the Imâm Mehdee.

The city of Koom was given sometime ago by the king as an estate to his mother, a pious liberal old lady, who expended considerable sums in restoring it to prosperity. She bestowed especial care in ornamenting the shrine of the female saint, the dome of which being gilt has a splendid appearance. This is a sanctuary even for murderers.

Whatever ignorant Europeans may say of the exclusion of females from the Mahomedan Paradise, the ladies who profess that religion have the consolation to know, that not only in this instance, but that of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, and in many others, they receive a homage which proves their title to the adoration of man, as saints in heaven, as well as angels upon earth.

I have had frequent discussions with my Persian friends upon the general condition of the female sex in this country; and cannot better illustrate the subject than by relating what passed on an occasion when I made a violent attack on their usages in this particular, and brought them into strong contrast with those of the civilized nations of Europe.

I began by stating, that, by making slaves of one half of the

* Fatima-ool-Masoomah.

creation they made tyrants of the other. "I am only surprised," I said, "how your females can bear the subjection and confinement to which they are doomed. How our Christian ladies would scorn such restraints! Their minds are cultivated as carefully as those of their fathers, brothers, or husbands, who trust for their good conduct to their sense of virtue and religion, rather than to strong doors and high walls. We desire," I added, "that those who share our pleasures and our toils should be acquainted with the world in which they live, that we may possess not only an affectionate wife, but an intelligent friend.

"Your Mahomedan ladies, on the contrary, are shut up like wild animals: whilst moving from one inclosure to another they travel in a curtained carriage; or, if walking, they are enveloped in robes which merely admit of their breathing and seeing their way through small eye-windows. Besides, they are not allowed to have any communication but with their husbands, children, or slaves. What with flattering one, coaxing another, beating a third, and fighting a fourth, these ladies must have a fine time of it in this world; and as to the next, though they are not denied Paradise, as we Europeans often erroneously believe, they are only promised, as a reward for the most pious life, half those blessings which await the virtuous of the male part of the creation!

"Your females," I said, "are married while mere children, and the consequence is, they are old women at twenty-five. This furnishes you with an excuse for forming other connexions, and treating your first wives with neglect."

This attack was listened to with symptoms of impatience; every one seemed anxious to answer, but precedence was given to Jaffier Ali Khan, and the ladies of his country could not have had a better advocate.

"Really, sir, you form a very erroneous judgment of the condition of our women. In this, as in many other instances, where our religion or our customs are concerned, vulgar errors pass from one to another till they are believed by all. Many persons in England imagine that a pigeon was taught to pick peas from the ears of the Prophet, who thought he might succeed by this device in persuading the ignorant that the pigeon was a celestial messenger. They also say that his tomb at Mecca is supported

between heaven and earth by means of a loadstone. If true, it would be a miracle; but it is not true: nevertheless people believe it, and the more readily, because it is wonderful. Now," said Jaffier, "it is the same with half the stories about our women. Why, I am told, it is a common belief with you that Mahomed has declared women have no souls! If you read the Koran you will find that our Prophet not only ranks women with men as true believers, but particularly ordains that they shall be well treated and respected by their husbands; he has indeed secured that by establishing their right to dowers as well as to claims of inheritance. He also has put it out of the power of a husband to hurt the reputation of his wife, unless he can produce four witnesses of her guilt; and should he have witnessed that himself, he must swear four times to the fact, and then by a fifth oath imprecate the wrath of God if he is a liar. Even after this, if the wife goes through the same ceremony, and imprecates the wrath of God upon her head if her husband does not swear falsely, her punishment is averted; or if she is divorced, her whole dower must be paid to her, though it involve the husband in ruin. What protection can be more effectual than this?

"Then a woman who is divorced may marry again after four months, which is believed to be soon enough. These widows, I assure you, sir, when they have a good dower, are remarkable for consulting their own judgment as to a second choice; they are not like young giddy girls, who are guided by their parents or the reports of old nurses or match-makers."

"But how do they see or hear," said I, "sufficient to direct them in their choice?"

"Why," said Jaffier Ali, "they see and hear much more than you imagine. Besides the liberty they enjoy of going abroad, some of the rooms in the merdâneh, or man's apartments, are only divided by a curtain or skreen from the zenâneh, or female apartment; and the ladies can, when they choose, both see and hear through that as much as they desire."

"But what is the use of those peeps and chance meetings to your young ladies, if they have not the liberty of choice with regard to their husbands?"

"Why, sir," said my friend, "our daughters are usually betrothed when children, and married when very young; the

husband is commonly selected from equality of condition and age. All this is settled by the parents, whose regard for their children, it is supposed, will make them take every means to promote their happiness. It must be confessed, however, that worldly motives often lead to youth and age being united; but this, I am told, occurs even in England. You will say an English father cannot force his daughter to marry, but he can no doubt use such means as may oblige her to marry a man for whom she has an aversion, or she may run away from her parents with some person of whom they disapprove.

"So you see," said Jaffier, "this liberty of choice which your forward, though inexperienced, young ladies exercise, has bad as well as good effects. Now our daughters never run away; and as they have seldom ever seen their destined husbands, if they have no love for them, neither have they any dislike. The change from the condition of a girl under the strict subjection of her mother to that of a wife at the head of her own part of the household is so agreeable, that they are too happy to adopt it.

"You English take your ideas of the situation of females in Asia from what you hear and read of the harems of kings, rulers, and chiefs, who being absolute over both the men and women of their territories, indulge in a plurality of wives and mistresses. These, undoubtedly, are immured within high walls, and are kept during life like slaves; but you ought to recollect, that the great and powerful, who have such establishments, are not in the proportion of one to ten thousand of the population of the country. If a person of inferior rank marry a woman of respectable connexions, she becomes mistress of his family; and should he have only one house, he cannot place another on an equality without a certainty of involving himself in endless trouble and vexation, if not disgrace. The dower usually settled upon such a lady, added to other privileges, and an unlimited authority over her children and servants, give her much importance; and she is supported by her relations in the assertion of every right with which custom has invested her.

"With regard to liberty, such a lady can not only go to the public bath, but she visits for one or two days, as she chooses, at the house of her father, brother, sister, or son. She not only goes to all these places unattended, but her husband's

following her would be deemed an unpardonable intrusion. Then she has visitors at home; friends, musicians, and dancers; the husband cannot enter the lady's part of the house without giving notice. I only wish," said Jaffier Ali, laughing, "you could see the bold blustering gentleman of the merdâneh in the ladies' apartment; you would hardly believe him to be the same person. The moment his foot crosses the threshold, every thing reminds him he is no longer lord and master; children, servants, and slaves look alone to the lady. In short, her authority is paramount: when she is in good humour, everything goes on well; and when in bad, nothing goes right. It is very well for grandees, who, besides power and wealth, have separate houses and establishments, and are above all regard for law and usage, to have harems, and wives, and female slaves; but for others, though they may try the experiment, it can never answer;" and he shook his head, apparently with that sincere conviction which is the result of experience.

Hajee Hoosein, who had brought our evening kelliâns, and was listening to this defence of Mahomedan ladies with great attention, exclaimed at this last sentence, "Sîdee says very truly,

'Two dervises can sleep on one carpet,
But two kings cannot rest in one kingdom.'"

"Very true, Hajee," said Jaffier Ali, "nor can two mistresses be at peace in one house."

"Why, then," said I, "did your Prophet permit polygamy, and set so bad an example? for while he limited his followers to four wives, he obtained a peculiar dispensation to have nine himself, besides 'Slaves of his right hand.'"*

Meerzâ Aga Meer, who is a holy Syed, and consequently of the Prophet's family, took the word, as he is wont to do upon all occasions when he hears a name so sacred irreverently treated.

"The reasons of Mahomed (on whom be the blessing of God)," said the Meerzâ, calmly, "are inscrutable; but as far as his acts can be judged by erring mortals, or considered otherwise than as proceeding from Divine authority, we may believe that in permitting polygamy, he only followed the custom of the

* This phrase is applied to those slaves acquired in wars with infidels.

Jews; in whose Prophet, Moses, you Christians, as well as we Musselmans, believe. The limitation to four legitimate wives was intended as a check, no doubt, upon those habits of sensual indulgence, into which not only the affluent of the Jews, but the Pagan Arabs, had fallen; and it was the enormity of their vices which led our Prophet to denounce such severe punishment now and hereafter upon those who continued to follow wicked courses.

"There is no doubt," said Aga Meer, "that the custom to which you have alluded, of very early marriages, and the effects of climate and sedentary habits, bring on a premature old age in many of our females. But after all, the number who take advantage of the license to have a plurality of wives is not near so great as you imagine. Take a thousand Persians and you will not find ten with more than two wives, and not thirty with more than one. Who can afford it? The expense of a marriage, the maintenance of females, and, above all, the dower which is required, and which remaining at the lady's sole disposal, is independent of that inheritance to which she and her children are entitled from the remainder of the husband's property, are insuperable objections.

"You speak," said he, addressing himself to me, "as if your pity were limited to our ladies; if you were more intimately acquainted with the condition of us husbands, we should have some share of your sympathy. Jaffier Ali has already explained to you some of the rights and privileges of our ladies, which are usually supported by a host of relations, but he has not enumerated one half. We may, it is true, escape from one wife by marrying another; but if we are not rich, such a proceeding involves the giving up most of our comforts in life. What I have said applies to men of moderate means; and as to the great mass of the population who live by their labour, few can support two wives. If you have any doubts respecting the equality of condition of their partners, do but listen now and then near their houses, and you will hear a shrill and sharp voice rating the supposed lord and master in a manner which will instantly relieve your mind from any anxiety you may now feel for the rights of the softer sex in Persia."

This sally of the good Meer produced the more mirth, from

its being unusal for him to depart from his gravity. But resuming his serious air, he continued; "Mahomedan women have never real power until they have offspring. Mâder, or the mother, is, from the prince to the peasant, the chief object of affection and respect. On her not only domestic concerns, but the making of marriages usually depends. The care and indulgence she bestows upon her children is often in strong contrast to the neglect and harshness of the father, which deepens the impression of gratitude they entertain for her during life. This sentiment is so general, that nothing causes such complete loss of character as want of love and duty towards a mother.

"Have you studied our law," said Meerzâ Aga Meer to me, "particularly that part of it which relates to property and inheritance?" I confesssed I had not given the subject that attention it merited. "I thought so," said the Meer, "or you would not have judged so lightly of the condition of our females.

"It is," said the Meer, "the possession of property, and the right of inheriting and using it, which gives respect and consequence to persons with others as well as themselves. Now you will find, both by the Koran, which is the fountain of our law, and by the commentaries, which are streams from that sacred source, that females have equal rights with males to use property; and their claim to inheritance, though somewhat smaller, as is the case in other countries, is on a scale that shows the light in which they are held by our laws and institutions."

The Meerzâ supported his argument by more quotations from the book of Mahomed, from traditions, and commentaries by learned doctors, than I shall repeat. The sum of it, however, was to this effect, that a woman who has property of her own, which includes her dower, has full command of it during her life. At her death the husband has half if there are no children, and a fourth if there are. The remainder is divided among them equally, females having the same share as males.

When the husband dies, his wife or wives (legally married) inherit one fourth of his property, if there are no children; if there are, the wife or wives have only one eighth: but this is always independent of the dower or settlement made at the period of marriage.

If a man leave an only daughter or grand-daughter, she has the half of his estate; if two or more, they have two-thirds. If he leave a son and daughters, the son has the share of two females, besides becoming, after the shares are allotted, the heir-general or residuary legatee.

The daughters born in wedlock have their allotted shares of inheritance, but in no case can they become heirs to any property beyond that amount, except to their manumitted slave. On the death of such a person they have a right to share as a relation, and can inherit as heirs. "The following text of the Koran is curious," said the Meer, "and merits to be quoted: 'There is not among women any heiress except her who kindly freed the enslaved neck.'"

"All you have said," I observed, "is very well. I understand the rights of your legitimate wives and daughters; but what becomes of the numerous progeny of slaves and others of the Harem?"

"What becomes of your illegitimate children in England?" replied the Meer, with more asperity than was usual to him; but my attack had roused him. "If," he continued, "the book which was written by Meerzâ Aboo Tâlib, who travelled in your country, is at all true, a great proportion of your females and their offspring are in a much more miserable and degraded state than any in our country! But perhaps," said he, in a milder tone, "Aboo Tâlib has exaggerated, which travellers are in the habit of doing."

I made no answer, for I thought of the parable of the "mote and the beam," and turned the conversation from this part of the subject by asking whether a man or woman could not bequeath their property, "I am no Moollâh," said Aga Meer, "to give a precise answer to such a question; but I know this, they can bestow it during life, and I believe that though, according to the strict interpretation of the Koran, pious or charitable bequests are alone legal, others are attended to by the judges when not very injurious or improper. I conclude this is the case, by my knowledge that wills are frequently made; but I am," he repeated, "no Moollâh."

"That you are not a Moollâh, I am very glad," said Jaffier Ali, "for I never can understand these doctors of our law; they

have always so many reasons to state on both sides of every question, that they quite confuse me, and I really believe that wise and learned as they are, they often confuse themselves." "There is nothing, I can assure you, sir," said Jaffier Ali to me "that these Moollâhs like better than advocating the cause of our ladies, who, what with their aid, and that of other supporters, as well as their own spirit, have, I think, more than an equal share of power and authority."

"But why," said I, "if they have this power, and such rights of property, are they cooped up, and never allowed to stir abroad without veils? with such usages how can they attain that knowledge of the world which is necessary to enable them to perform their duties?"

"As to cooping up," said Aga Meer, who here resumed the contest, "Jaffier Ali has already explained the indulgences they have, in going abroad, and seeing their friends at home; and with respect to wearing veils, what you deem a punishment they consider a distinction, and look down with pity on the women of the Eelyât tribes and others, who do not follow this custom.

"I do not exactly know," said he, "what you mean by a knowledge of the world; nor do I distinctly understand the benefits you expect them to derive from such knowledge. "We," he added, smiling, "consider that loving and obeying their husbands, giving proper attention to their children, and their domestic duties, are the best occupations for females."

"That is," I replied, "your females are either the slaves of your pleasures, or drudges to perform the work of your house. This is their lot in the present world, and in the next, though you do not exclude them from heaven, you only allow, even to the most virtuous, as I said before, half the joys which are destined for a good man. They are in fact neither treated nor instructed in a manner that can elevate them to the rank which God meant them to hold, as the companions and friends of man; and, in the condition in which your laws and usages place them, they never can have that respect for themselves, nor receive it from others, which is essential to form a civilized community."

"But," said the Meer, "we are not a civilized community, such as you allude to; some of our ladies, whose husbands or fathers are learned men, have considerable knowledge, and many

of these have received an excellent education." "This," said I, "is a fact of which I am aware; my friend Jaffier Ali, who married the daughter of a physician, informed me how well the mind of his consort had been cultivated by her wise and pious father, and I have seen a small volume of poems copied by her, which he means to present to the Elchee; but I consider her, and some others with similar endowments, as exceptions to the general rule."

"Very fortunately," replied Aga Meer, "they are exceptions: if the majority of our females were so well instructed, they would be far before their fathers and husbands, and that would never do. Changes must begin with the men or we shall have all in confusion.

"With respect to the difference of rewards and punishments between the male and female sex, it has been considered," said the Meer, "that as the latter have not the same opportunities of acquiring knowledge, their responsibility should be less, and it is decreed that they shall only receive for any crime half the punishment that would be inflicted upon a man. The same principle, in reference to their good actions, has led to their being only deemed entitled to half the enjoyment that a man can attain in the next world. But this is a point," said the Meer, "that I do not well comprehend. It has puzzled many of our wisest Moollâhs, and volumes upon volumes of contradictory opinions have been written by the expounders of the Koran, upon the duties, rewards, and punishments of women here and hereafter; God alone knows who is right and who is wrong."

"I know as little as you or the Moollâhs either," said Jaffier Ali, "of what will be the lot of our ladies in the next world, but I am positive they enjoy plenty of power in this. Really, my good friend," said he, addressing me, "if you could get a peep behind the curtain, you would find that from the palace of the king to the hut of the peasant, some personage, either in the shape of a wife or a mother, secretly or openly rules the whole household, the master not excepted. Some men, in the hope of preserving their authority, marry a woman of low connexions, or a slave, who cannot claim a dower. Such wives, being pennyless and unsupported by relations, will, they expect, continue mild and submissive, and neither give themselves airs nor leave the house in a pet. These wary gentlemen, however, are often

disappointed; for if the partners they select are handsome and beloved, they too become tyrants and tormentors."

"That may be," said Mahomed Hoosein Khan, who had hitherto listened to our discussion with much more patience than I had expected, "but in such a case a man becomes a slave of his own passions, which is far better than selling himself, as many do, to be the slave of those of an arrogant woman, who, from superior birth or great wealth, considers herself as the ruler of him she has condescended to espouse."

Hajee Hoosein, on hearing this remark, eagerly exclaimed, "How exactly that was the case with Sâdee! 'My termagant of a wife,' (said that wise man), 'with whom, after my release from the Christians at Tripoli,* I had received a dower of a hundred dinars, one day addressed me in a reproachful tone, and asked, 'Are not you the contemptible wretch whom my father ransomed from the slavery of the Franks at the cost of ten dinars?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I am the same wretch whom he delivered from the infidels for ten dinars, and enslaved to you for one hundred!'"

"Poor Sâdee!" said Khan Sahib, with a half sigh that indicated fellow-feeling: "but," added he, "there is a possibility of escape from such a condition. I will tell you a story of an acquaintance of mine, who had the good fortune to terrify one of these high-born shrews into good behaviour, but his success, as you will hear, was of no benefit to his friends.

"Sâdik Beg was of good family, handsome in person, and possessed of both sense and courage; but he was poor, having no property but his sword and his horse, with which he served as a gentleman retainer of a nabob. The latter, satisfied of the purity of Sâdik's descent, and entertaining a respect for his character, determined to make him the husband of his daughter Hooseinee, who, though beautiful, as her name implied, was remarkable for her haughty manner and ungovernable temper.

"Giving a husband of the condition of Sâdik Beg to a lady of Hooseinee's rank was, according to usage in such unequal matches, like giving her a slave, and as she heard a good report of his personal qualities, she offered no objections to the marriage, which was

* Tripoli in Syria: the Christians must have been some of the Crusaders.

celebrated soon after it was proposed, and apartments were assigned to the happy couple in the nabob's palace.

"Some of Sâdik Beg's friends rejoiced in his good fortune; as they saw, in the connexion he had formed, a sure prospect of his advancement. Others mourned the fate of so fine and promising a young man, now condemned to bear through life all the humours of a proud and capricious woman; but one of his friends, a little man called Merdek, who was completely henpecked, was particularly rejoiced, and quite chuckled at the thought of seeing another in the same condition with himself.

"About a month after the nuptials Merdek met his friend, and with malicious pleasure wished him joy of his marriage. 'Most sincerely do I congratulate you, Sâdik,' said he, 'on this happy event!' 'Thank you, my good fellow, I am very happy indeed, and rendered more so by the joy I perceive it gives my friends.' 'Do you really mean to say you are happy?' said Merdek, with a smile. 'I really am so,' replied Sâdik. 'Nonsense,' said his friend; 'do we not all know to what a termagant you are united? and her temper and high rank combined must no doubt make her a sweet companion.' Here he burst into a loud laugh, and the little man actually strutted with a feeling of superiority over the bridegroom.

"Sâdik, who knew his situation and feelings, was amused instead of being angry. 'My friend,' said he, 'I quite understand the grounds of your apprehension for my happiness. Before I was married I had heard the same reports as you have done of my beloved bride's disposition; but I am happy to say I have found it quite otherwise: she is a most docile and obedient wife.' 'But how has this miraculous change been wrought?' 'Why,' said Sâdik, 'I believe I have some merit in effecting it, but you shall hear.'

"'After the ceremonies of our nuptials were over, I went in my military dress, and with my sword by my side, to the apartment of Hooseinee. She was sitting in a most dignified posture to receive me, and her looks were anything but inviting. As I entered the room a beautiful cat, evidently a great favourite, came purring up to me. I deliberately drew my sword, struck its head off, and taking that in one hand and the body in the other, threw them out of the window. I then very unconcern-

edly turned to the lady, who appeared in some alarm: she, however, made no observations, but was in every way kind and submissive, and has continued so ever since.'

"'Thank you, my dear fellow,' said little Merdek, with a significant shake of the head—'a word to the wise;' and away he capered, obviously quite rejoiced.

"It was near evening when this conversation took place; soon after, when the dark cloak of night had enveloped the bright radiance of day, Merdek entered the chamber of his spouse, with something of a martial swagger, armed with a scimitar. The unsuspecting cat came forward to welcome the husband of her mistress, but in an instant her head was divided from her body by a blow from the hand which had so often caressed her. Merdek having proceeded so far courageously, stooped to take up the dissevered members of the cat, but before he could effect this, a blow upon the side of the head from his incensed lady laid him sprawling on the floor.

"The tattle and scandal of the day spreads from zenâneh to zenâneh with surprising rapidity, and the wife of Merdek saw in a moment whose example it was that he imitated. 'Take that,' said she, as she gave him another cuff, 'take that, you paltry wretch; you should,' she added, laughing him to scorn, 'have killed the cat on the wedding day.'"

We were all highly entertained with Khan Sahib's story, which closed the discussion upon the rights, privileges, and usages of Persian ladies; but though I left the party satisfied that these were greater than I imagined, I continued unchanged in my opinion that the civilization of Mahomedan countries must ever be retarded by the condition assigned to the female sex by their Prophet, who, though he neither denies that they have souls, nor shuts the gates of Paradise against them, yet gives them only half the responsibility, half the punishment, and half the enjoyments assigned here and hereafter to the lords of the creation.

Some days after our discussion concerning the rights of Mahomedan ladies, I had a long conversation with Aga Meer as to divorces. These, he told me, were very rare in Persia, it being deemed a greater scandal for a man to put away his wife than for a woman to be divorced.

The usual ground of such a proceeding is a sudden fit of pas-

sion or jealousy. That is followed by repentance, and the lady is taken back. "But here," he added, "the law has interposed to prevent the abuse of this indulgence by capricious husbands. If a man pronounces three divorces against a free woman, or two against a slave,* he can lawfully wed neither of them again unless they have been espoused by another, and this second husband dies, or shall divorce them."

When it happens that a husband wishes to recover his wife whom he had divorced in a passion, a convenient husband is sought; but the law forbids a mockery being made of such marriages. They may be short in duration, but the parties must live during the period they are united as man and wife.

The consequence of this law is, that none but those who add to caprice and passion, doting fondness for the lady, will ever seek a re-union that is attended with such indelicacy and shame. Nevertheless, this proceeding sometimes takes place, and no doubt often gives rise to extraordinary incidents. These become the groundwork of many an amusing tale, in which the imagination of the narrator has ample range for exaggeration without exceeding the bounds of possibility.

In all the stories I ever heard, grounded on divorces, the lady is always young and beautiful, the husband old, ugly, rich, and passionate; and the person chosen to be the medium of regaining the wife is, though apparently in such distress that a few piastres will tempt him to act the part required, usually a lover in disguise, or one who becomes, like the Cymon of our great poet, animated by love of the object with whom he is united, to a degree that transforms the supposed clod into a perfect hero of romance, who rather than give up the fair lady, who prefers him, to her old mate, suffers every hardship, and braves every danger in pursuance of her plans and intrigues to prevent their separation. The framing of the plot is invariably given to the female, and it is often such as to do honour to the genius of the sex.

In the Arabian Tales on this subject Haroon-oor-Rasheed, and

* The same principle which subjects slaves to only half punishment for crimes, renders them liable to less suffering from the caprice of the man who marries them. The husband should, strictly speaking, only have the power to pronounce one divorce and a half on a slave: but the fraction puzzled the doctors of the law, and they have agreed it should be two divorces.

his vizier Bermekee, are employed to aid the lovers in their night wanderings in Bagdad. In Persia Shah Abbas the Great, and his minister, act the part of the caliph and his vizier, and both parties are described as promoting by their advice, generosity, and power, the happiness of the new married couple, and bringing to shame the old hunks of a husband and the corrupt ministers of justice, whom his wealth had bribed to lend their endeavours to compel the lovers by all kinds of threats and punishments to consent to a separation.

The stories on this subject are of infinite variety, nor will a well practised story-teller give any tale twice in the same words, or with the same incidents.

Moollâh Adeenah, the story-teller to his majesty, of whom I shall have occasion to speak hereafter, told me, that he considered it as much as his head was worth to tell a tale twice without variations to the king of kings.

"Besides my own invention," said he, "I have a great book, containing anecdotes on all subjects, and an infinite quantity of amusing matter, which I select at pleasure, and adapt my story to the circumstances of the moment, and to the characters of those who form my audience."

There are no tales in Persia that undergo more changes than those which relate to divorces. The different sects of Mahomedans hold different doctrines on this head, and the story-teller must not offend any of his auditors. Besides, there is often a fear of personal allusions, which compels him to remove his characters from one country to another, to keep them out of harm's way; as my Uncle Toby advised Trim to do with his giants, in that best of all good stories, "The King of Bohemia and his seven Castles."

I have heard a celebrated story of a merchant called Hajee Sâlah Kej-Khoolk, the cross-grained, told in four or five different ways, and particularly that incident in his life relating to his having, in one of those bursts of passion to which he was liable, divorced, for the third time, a beautiful young female of high rank, whose parents this old, ugly, ill-humoured, wealthy man, had bribed, by settling a large dowry upon her.

According to the edition of this tale, which will serve as a specimen of those grounded on divorces, the old Hajee was at the

town of Nishâpoor in Khorassan, when in a violent fit of rage he pronounced the last divorce upon the lady, whose name was Maidee.

She immediately left his house and went to her parents. They, though moved at first by the tears with which she implored them to assist her in resisting all proposals for a re-union with a husband whom she abhorred, soon gave way to the worldly motives which induced them to desire her return to a person who was continually making them presents, and who was now more generous than ever, in the hope of inducing them to promote his interests with one of whom, notwithstanding his conduct, he was distractedly fond.

Maidee seeing no other opportunity of escape from the continued importunities to which she was exposed, listened to the proposals made through the old nurse, of a youth of the name of Omar, who, though poor, was of a respectable family, and whose sister was one of the wives of the governor of the town. This sister had seen Maidee at the public bath, and it was the account which she gave of her surprising beauty and great dower that determined Omar to try every means to make her his wife.

The good nurse, who was attached to the family of Omar, painted his personal appearance and qualities to Maidee in such colours, that she was quite willing to allow him to be the instrument of her deliverance. The plot was soon settled; Maidee, with affected reluctance, consented to the proposals of Hajee Sâlah for a re-union, provided the person chosen to be her husband for twenty-four hours was of respectable family and good appearance. These conditions she insisted upon as indispensable to her reputation. Besides she now also pretended that absence had revived her regard for the old Hajee, and she desired the merit of showing (by the sacrifice of a husband whom many might prefer to him) that her attachment was sincere.

The old merchant, in raptures at the prospect of repossessing his favourite, agreed to all she proposed. An agent was immediately appointed to look out for a person of the description she desired, but whose circumstances were such as to make him consent to act the discreditable part of a convenient husband.

Omar threw himself in the way of this agent, and contrived to utter in his hearing boastings of his family, complaints of his

relatives, and of the consequent poverty and despair to which he was reduced. "If I had been a dishonourable fellow," said he (speaking to a companion, but loud enough for the agent to hear), "and one that could have consented to break my pledged word, I might have made my fortune; but, thank God, I am not such a man! I would embrace ruin, and encounter death a thousand times before I would depart from or violate any promise I had made. I have made up my mind to leave Nishâpoor; why should I remain? I know not that I shall have a morsel to eat to-morrow." So saying he abruptly quitted his friend, and walked down the street. He was followed by the agent, who saw, in the respectability of his family, his poverty, and above all his determined adherence to his word, the very person of whom he was in search.

Omar stopped under some trees at the skirts of the town, where the agent came up to him. "A fine evening," said the latter. "I am indifferent as to the state of the weather," replied the apparently agitated Omar. "You seem to have some distress of mind?" "That cannot concern you," said the youth. "You know not," said the wily agent; aid often comes through means the least expected: if you confide your griefs to me, humble as I appear, I may be able to administer relief." This and some more soothing speeches led Omar with apparent reluctance to open his heart and relate his story.

He was, he told the agent, the youngest son of a Tûrkûmân chief, well known in the plains of Kipchâk. He had lately offended his father, by refusing to reveal the place of concealment of a man to whom he had promised protection, and was therefore banished his presence. He had made an offer of his services at Nishâpoor; but after these were accepted, he had been compelled to abandon this prospect, and to part with his horse, his sword, and all he possessed in the world, rather than violate a pledge he had given to an unfortunate friend, whose debts he had just paid by expending the last dinar he had in the world. "But," he added, "to-morrow's sun will not find me in Nishâpoor; I shall trust my stars to guide me to some land where I may be more fortunate."

The agent praised his high sense of honour; and, after much circumlocution, proposed to present him with a hundred tomans,

provided he would consent to marry the beautiful Maidee one day, divorce her the next, and instantly quit the country never to return.

Omar pretended at first to be highly indignant at a proposal which he thought derogatory to his honour: but his scruples were gradually removed, and he at length took the money and pledged that word and honour, which had hitherto been his ruin, that he would do everything which was required.

No time was lost in preparing the contract of marriage; the nuptials were celebrated with all due ceremony, and the new-married couple remained alone in a house in a retired part of the town, which had been prepared for them. When Maidee was unveiled, her beauty far exceeded all that the imagination of Omar had dared to depict her. He was in raptures, and she was equally enchanted with him. They mutually vowed that whatever was the success of their plan, no power should ever separate them.

The dawn of the following morning found Hajee Sâlah at the door, anxious to abridge the happiness of the lovers as much as the law would permit. He had knocked several times and called to the inmates without receiving any answer, when he was nearly stunned by a blow on the head, and turning round, saw a savage looking Tûrkûmân mounted on a large horse, armed with a long spear, with the shaft of which he had inflicted the blow. "Hold my horse," said the fellow as he dismounted, "while I go into the house." "You have two hands, you old rascal," said another savage, giving him a second blow, and making him hold the horse on which he rode. Before the poor Hajee could recover from his surprise, a party of twenty Tûrkûmâns, with their chief, were around him. He showed an intention of escaping, but that only produced an order for his being put to death if he attempted to move from the spot.

"Where is the darling boy?" exclaimed the chief; "I have forgiven him all: I long to clasp him in my arms!" "Renowned Kâdir Beg," said one of his followers, who had just come out of the house, "you have more to forgive than you are aware of; your son is married." "Married!" exclaimed the old chief. "Is the blood of the first race on the plains of Kipchâk contaminated? Has he married the daughter of a

citizen of Nishâpoor?" "No," said the man, "she belongs to a family of rank; she is beautiful as the full moon, and has besides a rich dower; having been divorced, in a fit of passion, by an ill-tempered wealthy old merchant, who was wholly unworthy of her, but who threatens to take this inestimable pearl from your highness's son Omar Beg."

"Where is the old villain," said the chief, "that dares to claim any one whom I protect?" and he struck his spear on the ground in a rage that made Hajee Sâlah tremble for his life; "but let me see and embrace my long lost boy." He went into the house, but soon returning, directed two of his finest led horses to be brought to the door, on one of which Omar was mounted, and on the other his bride; and away they rode at full speed.

Three men were left behind; two remained in the house; and the third guarded Hajee Sâlah, who stood trembling and holding the two horses, inwardly cursing himself and his agent for selecting a wild Tûrkûmân as a convenient bridegroom to a beautiful Persian lady.

After a delay of some hours the Tûrkûmâns followed their companions. The house at which this scene occurred had been so cautiously selected by Hajee Sâlah to avoid observation, that nobody observed what was passing. The moment he was relieved he ran to the palace of the governor, calling aloud for justice. The governor had gone a hunting, and was not expected till night. When he returned he was so fatigued that he could not be seen till next day. Then so many proofs were required, and so many delays took place, that the Hajee began to suspect the ruler of the city was in league with the Tûrkûmân chief. But when he afterwards learnt that the whole was a contrivance, that Omar's sister was the wife of the governor, and that the parents of Maidee had been reconciled to the marriage, all hope of redress vanished, and he immediately left Nishâpoor, amid the laughter of high and low, for all seemed equally delighted at what had happened to Hajee Sâlah, the cross-grained. His name has ever since been recorded in story, as an example of the fate which awaits age and ill temper when they aspire to possess youth and beauty, without knowing how to appreciate and guard such blessings, when they have obtained them.

CHAPTER XVI.

Departure from Koom — Pool-e-Dellâk — Deryâ-e-Kebeer — Valley of the Shadow of Death—Story of a Ghool—Remarks on Persian Poetry.

FROM the city of Koom we proceeded to Sooltâneah, where the king was encamped; but I cannot allow my reader to arrive at that place before he has accompanied me to Teheran with the first mission, and heard the account of its reception, and a description of Fettih Ali Shah and his court, before these became familiar with envoys and travellers from Calcutta, London, Paris, and St. Petersburgh.

Our first stage towards Teheran was to a place called Pool-e-Dellâk, or the Barber's Bridge; which, according to the tale of those who lived at the village in the vicinity, was built by the barber of Shah Abbas the Great, to save others from a danger which he himself narrowly escaped, of being drowned when crossing this river.

This munificent barber, we were informed, was very wealthy, as many of his profession are in Persia. Their skill in shaving the heads and trimming the beards of kings and nobles, though highly prized, is subordinate to that which they display as attendants at the warm bath. It is on their superior address in rubbing, pinching, joint-cracking, and cleansing the human frame at the hummums that their fame is established. The luxury of the bath in Persia is enjoyed by all, from the highest to the lowest. These baths are always good, and often splendid buildings. They are sought by the lower classes as essential to health in persons who seldom wear, and when they do, seldomer change their under garments. The higher ranks indulge in them to still greater excess, and in their progress through the various apartments of graduated heat, from the outer saloon to the houz or fountain of the inner bath, they are waited upon by different

domestics, who, besides aiding to undress and dress them, serve them with every species of refreshment. Among these attendants the man of most consequence is the dellâk or barber. For he who has the honour to bathe and shave a king must not only be perfect in his art, but also a man altogether trustworthy ; and confidence amongst eastern rulers is usually followed by favour, and with favour comes fortune. This accounts for barbers building bridges in Persia !

I was one day speaking to my friend Meerzâ Aga of the munificence of the barber of the great Abbas, in a manner which implied doubt of the fact. He observed he knew not whether the barbers of the Seffavean monarchs built bridges, but "I do know," he said, "that the Khâsterâsh (literally personal shaver) of our present sovereign has, in the abundance of his wealth, built a palace for himself close to the royal bath at Teheran. Then," said the good Meerzâ, "he is entitled to riches, for he is a man of pre-eminent excellence in his art, and has had for a long period under his special care the magnificent beard of his majesty, which is at this moment, and has been for years, the pride of Persia."

"Well," I replied, "if your personal shaver has built such a mansion, I will no longer doubt the wealth of the barber of Shah Abbas, for that monarch, though he wore no beard, had, we are told by travellers, and observe from paintings, a noble pair of mustachoes, of which he is said to have been very proud ; and the trimmer of which no doubt was, as he deserved to be, a great favourite."

This conversation led to a long dissertation on mustachoes and beards, upon which subject my travels to countries that my Persian friends had never seen enabled me to give them much useful information.

I told them many stories about the Sikhs, a nation dwelling between the territories of Cabool and India, who, devoting their beards and whiskers to the goddess of destruction, are always prompt to destroy any one who meddles with them ; and who, from a combined feeling of religion and honour, look upon the preservation of life itself as slight in comparison with the preservation of a hair of their beards.

I next informed them how beards, whiskers, and mustachoes

were once honoured in Europe. I told them an anecdote of the great John De Castro, a former governor of Goa, the capital of the Portuguese possessions in India. He being in want of a considerable loan from the citizens of Goa for a military expedition, was at a loss for an adequate security.* His first intention was to pledge the bones of his gallant son Don Fernando, who had recently fallen in battle; but finding, on opening the grave, that the carcass was putrid, he offered, as next dear to his personal honour, a lock of his cherished mustachoes. This security was accepted, but immediately returned with more than the amount required; young and old vying with each other who should show most respect to so valuable a pledge.

The Persians of my audience twisted their mustachoes with a combined feeling of pleasure and pride on hearing this testimony to the value of that ornament of the visage; and Khan Sahib, who was one of the party, said to me with a smile, "You gentlemen with the mission wear mustachoes in compliance with the prejudices of the Persians; but is it true that many officers of your cavalry now wear them, and that they are again likely to become popular in England?" I said, perhaps they might; adding, I had no doubt that would be the case, if there appeared the slightest chance of their ever turning to account in the money-market, like those of John de Castro.

But I must quit this curious and interesting subject to proceed with my narration. At Pool-e-Dellâk the Elchee received letters from the prime minister Hajee Ibrahim, congratulating him upon his near approach to the capital. "My house," the Hajee wrote, "is assigned for your residence; and I am to be honoured by having you as my guest as long as you remain at the abode of sovereignty."

The minister also addressed letters to the mehmandar and to the secretaries of the Elchee, to inquire the exact time of his intended entry into Teheran, and to learn the hours at which he took his meals, the dishes of which he was fondest, and every other minute particular that could enable him to perform the task he had undertaken to his own satisfaction and that of the

* These facts are mentioned in the Introduction to Mickle's translation of the Lusiad.

king, whom he represented as very anxious that every thing should be done to honour and please the British representatives.

From the Barber's Bridge to our next stage was nearly fifty miles. We crossed a salt desert,* which Hajee Hoosein informed me, as he handed me the long snake of the kelliân, was once a sea; but at the birth of Mahomed it dried up, and thus became one of the many miracles to testify the importance to the world of that auspicious event.

The change of surface, from a crust of white clay impregnated with salt, to a stony plain, indicated that we had passed the desert. We immediately afterwards came to a rugged and broken road, through the most frighful precipices and ravines I had ever seen. "I wish these ravines had been made smooth at your prophet's birth," I said to my friend the Hajee, who continued riding along with me. "Here also," said he, in a half alarmed voice, "a miracle was effected, but it was not completed. This dreadful place is called the 'Valley of the Angel of Death.'† That terrific minister of God's wrath, according to tradition, has resting-places upon the earth, and this is one of his favourite abodes. He is surrounded by ghools, horrid beings, who, when he takes away life, feast upon the carcasses.

"The natural shape of these monsters," said Hajee Hoosein, "is terrible; but they can assume those of animals, such as cows or camels, or whatever they choose, often appearing to men as their relations or friends, and then they do not only transform their shapes, but their voices also are altered. The frightful screams and yells, which are often heard amid these dreaded ravines, are changed for the softest and most melodious notes; unwary travellers, deluded by the appearance of friends, or captivated by the forms, and charmed by the music, of these demons, are allured from their path, and after feasting for a few hours on every luxury, are consigned to destruction.

"The number of these ghools," said the Hajee, "has greatly decreased since the birth of the prophet, and they have no power

* This desert is called, where we crossed it, Deryâ-e-Kebeer, or Kemeen which signifies a desert; and the term Deryâ, which means the ocean, being prefixed, is a proof of the truth of the popular belief of this having been once a sea.

† Melek-ool-Mout derrat.

to hurt those who pronounce his name in sincerity of faith. But, what is that?" said he, spurring his horse, and upsetting the top of the kullean which he had in his hand, while he repeated aloud the name of Mahomet, which now resounded through the line. I was myself not a little startled at seeing a camel, which is one of the shapes the ghools take, but found, on recovering from my momentary alarm, that it was one of our own, which, trying to pass a little to the right of our path, had fallen over a precipice with its load.

When the Hajee rejoined me, he was far from being convinced that the camel which had fallen was the same he had at first seen. "It was probable," he said, "that a ghool, by the shape he assumed, had enticed our animal to follow him, and the latter would certainly have been lost but for my presence of mind and timely exclamations. These creatures," he added, "are the very lowest of the supernatural world, and, besides being timid, are extremely stupid, and consequently often imposed upon by artful men. I will recount you," he said, "a story that is well authenticated, to prove that what I say is just." I told him I was all attention, and he commenced his tale.

"You know," said he, "that the natives of Isfahan, though not brave, are the most crafty and acute people upon earth, and often supply the want of courage by their address. An inhabitant of that city was once compelled to travel alone at night through this dreadful valley. He was a man of ready wit, and fond of adventures, and, though no lion, had great confidence in his cunning, which had brought him through a hundred scrapes and perils that would have embarrassed or destroyed your simple man of valour.

"This man, whose name was Ameen Beg, had heard many stories of the ghools of the 'Valley of the Angel of Death,' and thought it likely he might meet one. He prepared accordingly, by putting an egg and a lump of salt in his pocket. He had not gone far amidst the rocks we have just passed, when he heard a voice crying 'Holloa, Ameen Beg Isfahânee! you are going the wrong road, you will lose yourself; come this way; I am your friend Kerreem Beg; I know your father, old Kerbela Beg, and the street in which you were born.' Ameen knew well the power the ghools had of assuming the shape of any person they choose;

and he also knew their skill as genealogists, and their knowledge of towns as well as families; he had therefore little doubt this was one of those creatures alluring him to destruction. He, however, determined to encounter him, and trust to his art for his escape.

"'Stop, my friend, till I come near you,' was his reply. When Ameen came close to the Ghool, he said, "You are not my friend Kerreem, you are a lying demon, but you are just the being I desired to meet. I have tried my strength against all the men and all the beasts which exist in the natural world, and I can find nothing that is a match for me. I came therefore to this valley in the hope of encountering a ghool, that I might prove my prowess upon him.'

"The Ghool, astonished at being addressed in this manner, looked keenly at him, and said, 'Son of Adam, you do not appear so strong.' 'Appearances are deceitful,' replied Ameen, 'but I will give you a proof of my strength. There,' said he, picking up a stone from a rivulet, 'this contains a fluid; try if you can so squeeze it, that it will flow out.' The Ghool took the stone, but after a short attempt returned it, saying 'the thing is impossible.' 'Quite easy,' said the Isfahânee, taking the stone and placing it in the hand in which he had before put the egg: 'Look there!' and the astonished Ghool, while he heard what he took for the breaking of the stone, saw the liquid run from between Ameen's fingers, and this apparently without any effort.

"Ameen, aided by the darkness, placed the stone upon the ground while he picked up another of a darker hue. 'This,' said he, 'I can see contains salt, as you will find if you can crumble it between your fingers;' but the Ghool looking at it confessed he had neither knowledge to discover its qualities, nor strength to break it. 'Give it me,' said his companion impatiently, and having put it into the same hand with the piece of salt, he instantly gave the latter all crushed to the Ghool, who seeing it reduced to powder, tasted it, and remained in stupid astonishment at the skill and strength of this wonderful man. Neither was he without alarm lest his strength should be exerted against himself, and he saw no safety in resorting to the shape of a beast, for Ameen had warned him, that if he com-

menced any such unfair dealing, he would instantly slay him; for ghools, though long-lived, are not immortal.

"Under such circumstances he thought his best plan was to conciliate the friendship of his new companion, till he found an opportunity of destroying him.

"'Most wonderful man,' he said, 'will you honour my abode with your presence; it is quite at hand: there you will find every refreshment; and after a comfortable night's rest you can resume your journey.'

"'I have no objection, friend Ghool, to accept your offer; but mark me, I am, in the first place, very passionate, and must not be provoked by any expressions which are in the least disrespectful; and in the second, I am full of penetration, and can see through your designs as clearly as I saw into that hard stone in which I discovered salt; so take care you entertain none that are wicked, or you shall suffer.'

"The Ghool declared that the ear of his guest should be pained by no expression to which it did not befit his dignity to listen; and he swore by the head of his liege lord, the Angel of Death, that he would faithfully respect the rights of hospitality and friendship.

"Thus satisfied, Ameen followed the Ghool through a number of crooked paths, rugged cliffs, and deep ravines, till they came to a large cave, which was dimly lighted. 'Here,' said the Ghool, 'I dwell, and here my friend will find all he can want for refreshment and repose.' So saying, he led him to various apartments, in which were hoarded every species of grain, and all kinds of merchandise, plundered from travellers who had been deluded to this den, and of whose fate Ameen was too well informed by the bones over which he now and then stumbled, and by the putrid smell produced by some half consumed carcasses.

"'This will be sufficient for your supper, I hope,' said the Ghool, taking up a large bag of rice; 'a man of your prowess must have a tolerable appetite.' 'True,' said Ameen, 'but I eat a sheep and as much rice as you have there before I proceeded on my journey. I am, consequently, not hungry, but will take a little lest I offend your hospitality.' 'I must boil it

for you,' said the demon; you do not eat grain and meat raw, as we do. Here is a kettle,' said he, taking up one lying amongst the plundered property. 'I will go and get wood for a fire, while you fetch water with that,' pointing to a bag made of the hides of six oxen.

"Ameen waited till he saw his host leave the cave for the wood, and then with great difficulty he dragged the enormous bag to the bank of a dark stream which issued from the rocks at the other end of the cavern, and after being visible for a few yards disappeared under ground.

"How shall I, thought Ameen, prevent my weakness being discovered; this bag I could hardly manage when empty, when full it would require twenty strong men to carry it; what shall I do? I shall certainly be eaten up by this cannibal Ghool, who is now only kept in order by the impression of my great strength. After some minutes' reflection, the Isfahânee thought of a scheme, and began digging a small channel from the stream, towards the place where his supper was preparing.

"'What are you doing?' vociferated the Ghool, as he advanced towards him; 'I sent you for water to boil a little rice and you have been an hour about it. Cannot you fill the bag and bring it away?' 'Certainly I can,' said Ameen. 'If I were content, after all your kindness, to show my gratitude merely by feats of brute strength, I could lift your stream if you had a bag large enough to hold it; but here,' said he, pointing to the channel he had begun, 'here is the commencement of a work in which the mind of a man is employed to lessen the labour of his body. This canal, small as it may appear, will carry a stream to the other end of the cave, in which I will construct a dam that you can open and shut at pleasure, and thereby save yourself infinite trouble in fetching water. But pray let me alone till it is finished,' and he began to dig. 'Nonsense,' said the Ghool, seizing the bag and filling it; 'I will carry the water myself, and I advise you to leave off your canal, as you call it, and follow me, that you may eat your supper and go to sleep; you may finish this fine work if you like it to-morrow morning.'

"Ameen congratulated himself on this escape, and was not slow in taking the advice of his host. After having eat heartily

of the supper that was prepared, he went to repose on a bed made of the richest coverlets and pillows, which were taken from one of the store-rooms of plundered goods. The Ghool, whose bed was also in the cave, had no sooner laid down than he fell into a sound sleep. The anxiety of Ameen's mind prevented him from following his example: he rose gently, and having stuffed a long pillow into the middle of this bed, to make it appear as if he were still there, he retired to a concealed place in the cavern to watch the proceedings of the Ghool. The latter awoke a short time before daylight, and rising, went, without making any noise, towards Ameen's bed, where not observing the least stir, he was satisfied that his guest was in a deep sleep, so he took up one of his walking sticks, which was in size like the trunk of a tree, and struck a terrible blow at what he supposed to be Ameen's head. He smiled not to hear a groan, thinking he had deprived him of life; but to make sure of his work, he repeated the blow seven times. He then returned to rest, but had hardly settled himself to sleep, when Ameen, who had crept into the bed, raised his head above the clothes and exclaimed, 'Friend Ghool, what insect could it be that has disturbed me by its tapping? I counted the flap of its little wings seven times on the coverlet. These vermin are very annoying, for though they cannot hurt a man, they disturb his rest!"

"The Ghool's dismay on hearing Ameen speak at all was great, but that was increased to perfect fright when he heard him describe seven blows, any one of which would have felled an elephant, as seven flaps of an insect's wing. There was no safety, he thought, near so wonderful a man, and he soon afterwards arose and fled from the cave, leaving the Isfahânee its sole master.

"When Ameen found his host gone, he was at no loss to conjecture the cause, and immediately began to survey the treasures with which he was surrounded, and to contrive means for removing them to his home.

"After examining the contents of the cave, and arming himself with a matchlock, which had belonged to some victim of the Ghool, he proceeded to survey the road. He had, however only gone a short distance when he saw the Ghool returning with a large club in his hand, and accompanied by a fox. Ameen's

knowledge of the cunning animal instantly led him to suspect that it had undeceived his enemy, but his presence of mind did not forsake him. 'Take that,' said he to the fox, aiming a ball at him from his matchlock, and shooting him through the head; 'take that for your not performing my orders. That brute,' said he, 'promised to bring me seven ghools, that I might chain them, and carry them to Isfahan, and here he has only brought you, who are already my slave.' So saying, he advanced towards the Ghool; but the latter had already taken to flight, and by the aid of his club bounded so rapidly over rocks and precipices, that he was soon out of sight.

"Ameen having well marked the path from the cavern to the road, went to the nearest town and hired camels and mules to remove the property he had acquired. After making restitution to all who remained alive to prove their goods, he became, from what was unclaimed, a man of wealth, all of which was owing to that wit and art which ever overcome brute strength and courage."

I was pleased with this tale, first as it bore so near a resemblance to some parts of my earliest favourite, Jack the Giant Killer; and next as the last incident of the fox bringing back the Ghool was an exact copy of the story of the Goat and the Lion in the celebrated Hindu work, the Pancha Tantra.

The goat, according to the Hindu tale, took shelter during a storm in the den of a lion; when he saw no chance of escape, he terrified the king of the beasts by boasting of a celestial origin, and telling him he had been condemned before he could return to Heaven to eat ten elephants, ten tigers, and ten lions. He had, he said, eaten every kind of animal but the lion; and saying this, he marched up to the astonished monster, who fled by a back way from his den. The lion in his flight met a fox, and described to him the appearance of the goat (an animal he had never seen before), his horns, his strange beard, and above all, his boasting language. The fox laughed, and told his majesty how he had been tricked. They went back together, and met the goat at the entrance of the den. The latter at once saw his danger, but his wits did not forsake him. "What conduct is this, you scoundrel?" said he to the fox: "I commanded you to get ten lions, and here you have only brought me one;" so

saying, he advanced boldly, and the lion, again frightened by his words and actions, fled in terror, allowing the goat to return quietly to his home.

I narrated this story to my Persian friend, saying, "This proves to me what I have long conjectured, that the greater part of your tales are taken literally from the Hindus." "Is it not as likely they have been stolen from us?" was his reply. "No," said I; "for their works in which these tales are written are much older than any you have." "That may be," said he, "but they are not older than Keiomerth, Housheng, or Jemsheed. These were the glorious days of Persia, and no doubt it was in their time the wily Hindus stole our stories; and if our conquering swords have since made us masters of India, and we have plundered a few tales along with other articles, why we have only recovered our own."

Khan Sahib, who had been riding along with us, smoking his kelliân, but who had not as yet spoken a word, now, with much gravity, took up the conversation. "I have listened," said he, "with great attention to Hajee Hoosein's most wonderful tale of the Ghool, and," addressing me, "to your supplement about a goat, a fox, and a lion. I shall store what I have heard in my memory for the benefit of my excellent grandmother, whom it is my duty to amuse. These tales shall also be given word for word to my little children, who will no doubt be as much delighted as I have been, to hear how a stupid monster was outwitted by a lying rogue, and how an impudent goat frightened a valiant lion."

"The dispute," said Khan Sahib, "regarding the invention of such sublime productions, no doubt involves matter deeply associated with the fame of the renowned empires of India and Persia; and, in the present dearth of that article, I do think they are right in claiming all they can for their ancestors."

"I quite understand, my good friend," said I, "the contempt you bestow upon the nursery tales with which the Hajee and I have been entertaining each other; but, believe me, he who desires to be well acquainted with a people will not reject their popular stories or local superstitions. Depend upon it, that man is too far advanced into an artificial state of society who is a

stranger to the effects which tales and stories like these have upon the feelings of a nation; and his opinions of its character are never likely to be more erroneous than when, in the pride of reason, he despises such means of forming his judgment."

"Well, well," said Khan Sahib, "there may be some truth in what you say; and I am the more inclined to believe it, as all the learning and philosophy which my good father endeavoured to instil into me never wholly eradicated my early predilection for such stories. I wish not to dispute the claim of our Indian neighbours to the merit of inventing those maxims of wisdom, which have been delivered to posterity through the mouths of cats, monkeys, goats, parrots, foxes, jackalls, and lions. But," added he, "as far as the reputation of the creative genius of Persia is concerned, I shall remain content with the wonders of the Shâh-nâmeh, told as they are in the language of the immortal Firdousee."

Though I could not give up my fondness for fables, I was quite ready to concur with my friend in his admiration of Firdousee, and nothing more was necessary to make him dilate upon this favourite work. His memory is extraordinary; and while I listened with pleasure to his recitation of several of the most ancient, and at the same time most beautiful passages of Persian poetry, I was instructed by his critical remarks, for he combines, with a knowledge of the European taste for simplicity, a love for Asiatic splendour of diction; and is particularly versed in those allusions in which their poetry abounds. He recited to me, from the Shâh-nâmeh, the greater part of the episode of the combats between Roostem and his unknown son Soohrâb.

This episode, in the first lines of which the poet tells his reader, "It is a tale full of the waters of the eye,"* is perhaps one of the greatest efforts of Firdousee's genius; and he rises even above himself in the relation of the death of Soohrâb and the insanity of his distracted mother.

The effect produced on the unhappy princess by the account of her son's death is instantaneous. She sets fire to her palace, desiring, when he who constituted her sole object in life was gone, to perish amid that splendour, which she valued on his

* "Yekee dâstân poor ab-e-cheshem."

account alone. Torn from the flames by her attendants, she commanded them to bring the body of her son, his horse, his arms, and his clothes.

"She kissed the horse's forehead, she bathed its hoofs with her tears; she clothed herself in the blood-stained garments of her son, she drew his bow, she wielded his lance, his sword, and his mace; and these fond and frantic actions were continued till nature was overpowered, and the distracted mother departed to join her beloved Soohrâb."

No translation in verse can convey to the mere English reader any just impression of the whole poem of the Shâh-nâmeh. The idiom in which it is written, and the allusions and metaphors with which it abounds, are too foreign to our language and taste to admit of success in such an undertaking; but a prose translation of this great work is a desideratum, and select passages might bear a poetical form. He, however, who attempts such a task, will not be successful unless possessed of a genius that raises him above the mechanical effort of a versifier. If ever such a translator devote himself to the beauties of this poem, he will find much to gratify himself and others.

I have before given a specimen of Firdousee's power in describing a battle; but though this is a species of composition in which the Persians consider him to excel, I have been more pleased with him when he strikes a softer and more harmonious note. His tales of love are often delightful, and nothing can exceed some of his descriptions of scenery.

I had long entertained this opinion, but was confirmed in it by a passage which Khan Sahib recited to me, after concluding the story of Soohrâb. It was an account of the events which took place when Siyâvesh was nominated by Afrâsiâb to govern the empire of Cheen. The young prince, anxious to enjoy with his beautiful bride Feeringheesh every luxury which this world could afford, sent persons in every direction over his extensive territories, to select the most agreeable and salubrious spot, that he might there fix his residence. The choice fell upon the city of Kung, which is represented to be a perfect terrestrial paradise. One line in the description of this favoured spot struck me as an instance of the power of a poet to seize the finest shades of distinction that belong to language, and to convey by such terms

the most correct idea to the mind. Speaking of the climate of Kung, Firdousee says,

"Its warmth was not heat, and its coolness was not cold." *

I expressed to Khan Sahib my admiration of this line, adding my regret that a poet who could write with such simplicity and beauty should indulge so often in forced metaphor, and hyperbolical phrases.

"Why," said my little friend, "I really think your quarrelling with Firdousee, because he wrote according to the taste of the nation to which he belonged, is something like finding fault with the Persians because they do not wear cocked hats and tight pantaloons, instead of lamb's wool caps and loose trowsers. They delight, and ever have done, in those conceits and images which offend you." "But yet," said I, "Sâdee is a great favourite, and he is almost always simple and clear in his style."

"Sâdee," said Khan Sahib, "has, as you state, a great reputation in Persia, but it is rather as a wise man and a moralist, than a poet. He seeks by fiction to adorn, not encumber truth; and the admiration of his reader is invariably given to the sentiment more than to the language in which it is clothed.

"As a proof," continued my friend, "that this is just, let us take two stanzas. In the first of these Sâdee thus describes himself:

'The snows of age rest upon my head,
Yet my disposition still makes me young.' †

In these lines, marked as they are by simplicity and beauty, the thought, not the expression, is what we most admire. In the second, when addressing sovereigns, he says,

'Be merciful, and learn to conquer without an army;
Seize upon the hearts of mankind, and be acknowledged the world's conqueror.' ‡

The boldness and sublimity of the lesson conveyed in this

* Gherm-esh ne-ghermee bood, oo serd-esh ne-serd.
† Berf-e-peeree meenesheened ber sêr-em
Hem-choon-ân teba-em jevânee kooned.
‡ Rehim koon oo bee fouj der teskeen bâsh
Dilhâ-e-âlem gheer oo shâh-e-âlem-gheer bâsh.

couplet predominates over the poetry, and this is the case throughout the works of Sâdee. How different are the sweet and musical strains of Hafiz! whose whole fame rests upon the creative fancy of his imagination, and the easy flow of his numbers. He delights us by the very scorn with which he rejects all sobriety of thought, and all continuity of subject. As a poet he is one of the first favourites of his countrymen, whose enthusiastic admiration is given to passages in his works that your taste would condemn; for instance, when referring to the fiction which relates that the tulip first sprung up in the soil which was moistened with the blood of Ferhâd, the celebrated lover of Sheereen, he says,

'Perhaps the tulip feared the evils of destiny,
Thence, while it lives, it bears the wine-goblet on its stalk.' *

"No conceit can be more fanciful, and you will perhaps add, more extravagant; but this stanza is most particularly admired by the Persians, much more so than a succeeding one in the same ode, where the poet, with a simplicity and feeling that will delight you, gives the reason for not having left his native place.

'They will not allow me to proceed upon my travels,
Those gentle gales of Mosellây,
That limpid stream of Rooknâbâd.' †

"Hâfiz," said Khan Sahib, "has the singular good fortune of being alike praised by saints and sinners. His odes are sung by the young and the joyous, who, by taking them in the literal sense, find nothing but an excitement to pass the spring of life in the enjoyment of the world's luxuries; while the contemplative sage, considering this poet as a religious enthusiast, attaches a mystical meaning to every line, and repeats his odes as he would an orison. At the time of his death," continued my friend, "there were many who deemed his works sinful and impious. These went so far as to arrest the procession of his funeral. The dispute rose high, and the parties were likely to come to blows, when it was agreed that a fâl, or lot, should be taken from his book. If that were favourable to religion, his

* Meger kih lâleh be-dânist bee-wefâ-e-deher
Kih tâ be-zâd oo be-shood jâm-e-mei z' kef-ne-nihâd.

† Ne meedihend ijâzet me-ra be-seir-oo-Sefer
Neseem-e-bâd-e-moosellâ we âb-e-Rooknâbâd.

friends were to proceed; but if calculated to promote vice, they promised not to carry his body to the sacred ground appropriated for its reception.

"The volume of odes was produced, and it was opened by a person whose eyes were bound, seven pages were counted back, when the heaven-directed finger pointed to one of his inspired stanzas,

'Withdraw not your steps from the obsequies of Hâfiz:
Though immersed in sin he will rise into paradise.' *

"The admirers of the poet shouted with delight, and those who had doubted joined in carrying his remains to a shrine near Shiraz, where, from that day to this, his tomb is visited by pilgrims of all classes and ages."

I found my friend Khan. Sahib, however partial from his habits to a literal interpretation of many passages, dwelt upon others that he deemed mystical with all the rapture of a Soofee. I asked him if he considered Hâfiz equal in this description of poetry to the celebrated author of the Mesnevee, who is usually called the Moollâh of Room?† "Certainly not," was his reply; "there is a depth and sublimity in the Mesnevee, which is equalled by no poet of this class. But I will repeat, in answer to your question, the observation of a famous Persian critic.

"A friend asked him how it happened that the two most celebrated Persian Soofee poets should differ so much in their description of love? Hâfiz, in the commencement of his work, observes:

'Love at first sight appeared easy, but afterwards full of difficulties.' ‡

The author of the Mesnevee, in exact opposition, says,

'Love at first resembles a bloody murderer,
That he may alarm all who are without his pale.' §

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* Kedem dereegh medâr ez jinâza-e-Hâfiz.
Kih ger-chih gherek-e-goonâh est meereved be-bihisht.

† Turkey.

‡ Kih ishk âsân nemood avvel welee ooftâd mooshkil-hâ.

§ Ishk avvel choo ser-khoonee booved,
Tâ be-tersend her kih beeroonee booved.

" 'Poor Hafiz,' said the critic, shaking his head, 'did not find out till the last, what the wiser Moollâh saw at a glance.' "

I was proceeding to make some further observations, when the sound of music and the appearance of the neighbouring villagers with their chiefs announced that we were near our encampment, and both Khan Sahib and myself were obliged to take our places in the order of march, which was always formed when we met such parties.

CHAPTER XVII.

Distant view of Teheran—Demavend—Rhe—Entrance into the Capital—Hajee Ibrahim—Zâl Khan—Terms of Courtesy.

THE first distant view we had of Teheran, the modern capital of Persia, was very imposing. It is situated near the foot of Elboorz, a mountain of the great range which stretches from Europe to the utmost limits of Asia. This range would appear high, were it not for Demavend, whose lofty peak, rising above the clouds, and covered with eternal snow, gives a diminutive appearance to every thing in its vicinity.

We had seen Demavend at the distance of one hundred miles from its base, but it increased in magnificence as we advanced; and those amongst us who delighted in the pages of Firdousee now planned an early visit to this remarkable mountain, whose summit that poet describes as "far from the abode of man, and near to Heaven." A Persian of our party, called Meerzâ Ibrahim, who had been at Demavend, increased our curiosity by a detail of the wonders we should see when we visited that place. "Amongst others," said he, "is the cave that was once the habitation of the Deev-e-Seffeed, who was slain by Roostem; and if fortunate," he added, "you may catch a glimpse of the Deev's daughter, whose dwelling is on the point of an inaccessible rock, at the edge of which she now and then appears; and is reported, notwithstanding her age, which cannot be less than two thousand four hundred years, to be as active with her distaff, and looking as well as ever.

"Higher up the mountain," continued our informant, "amid rocks and snow, which forbid all mortal approach, dwells Zohâk, the most wicked of kings, surrounded by a court of magicians

and sorcerers; this at least is the belief of the worshippers of fire. But it has been considered as unworthy of credit by the Mahomedan historians of Persia, who, however, do not treat so lightly the record which asserts, that in ancient times, when Menoo-cheher made peace with Afrâsiâb,* one of the articles of the treaty was, that Persia was to have all the country in a north-east direction, over which an arrow could be shot from Demavend. A hero, called Arish, ascended to the top of the mountain, and such was his miraculous prowess that he sent an arrow to the banks of the Oxus, a distance of between five and six hundred miles. Monarchs in these days," said Meerzâ Ibrahim, "we are assured were very particular in performing their treaties, and the country was faithfully ceded."

"I have read all the discussions upon this subject," said Meerzâ Aga Meer, who here joined in the conversation. "One Persian historian, who relates this fact, admits that it is incomprehensible, but at the same time adds, that he deems it his duty to give it as received from former writers, who state, that the arrow which was discharged at sunrise did not fall till noon.

"Another author of high reputation informs us, that the 'Festival of the Arrow,'† on the 13th of October,‡ which is still kept by the followers of Zoroaster, is in commemoration of this event.

"The arrow about which so much has been said and written," added Aga Meer, "is admitted by almost all to have been of gold. Some philosophers, however, have conjectured that it contained quicksilver and other substances, which, when heated by the sun, added to its projectile force; and we are informed, that the great 'Boo-Ali-seenâ§ did not consider this feat beyond the compass of human ingenuity."

I concluded this discussion about the wonderful arrow by observing, that some sceptical commentators on this passage of ancient history had given their opinion, that the story of the golden arrow, flying from Demavend to the Oxus, was nothing

* The Sovereign of Tartary.

† Teer gah.

‡ The month of October, in the ancient Persian Calendar, is called Teer or the Arrow.

§ Avicenna.

more than a bold metaphor, to express that the Persians conquered that extent of country by their skill in archery; "But the opinions of such writers," I said, "are rejected by all who prefer plain facts to far-fetched metaphors."

At a short distance from our camp we observed several mounds of earth and ruined walls, which we were told was all that remained of the once famous Ragas of Tobit—the Rhages of the Greeks, and the Rhe of the Persians.

While all who had imagination and a love of antiquity dwelt with delight on the prospect of ascending Demavend, and visiting the ruins of Rhe, the men of business looked only to Teheran, which appeared to me to offer little to the view which was either grand or pleasing. One palace alone attracted any portion of my admiration. It stood near the base of the mountain Elboorz, on a commanding site, and was every way suited for a royal residence.

We were called from our plans and prospects to prepare for the entry of the Mission into the capital; but the ceremonies of the procession were not yet fully arranged. Letters and notes passed every minute; secretaries and confidential messengers went to and fro without intermission. These communications and messages chiefly related to the forms of our reception. The period of entering Teheran had been long fixed by the Elchee, who had consulted an eminent astrologer at Isfahan upon this subject. The wise man, after casting his nativity, and comparing what he found written in the book of his destiny with the object of his Mission, which he had been told was the establishment of friendly intercourse with Persia, declared, by a paper given under his hand, for which he was no doubt well fee'd, "That, provided the Elchee entered the gate of Teheran at forty-five minutes past two o'clock, P.M. on the 13th of November, 1800, success would attend his negotiation, and he would accomplish all his wishes."

Meerzâ Aga Meer, who, like the most enlightened of his countrymen, believed firmly in the occult science of astrology, had the best chronometer in our party intrusted to his care. It was given him because his situation enabled him to ride in the procession sufficiently near the Elchee to prompt him when to go a little faster or slower, in order that the gate of the capital

might be entered at the exact moment, a point to which the astrologer had attached the greatest importance.

The party who came out some miles to welcome the Elchee consisted of several noblemen, the chief of whom was Nou Rôz Khan Kajir, the Lord of Requests and Commander of the King's Guard.

About six hundred horse, principally royal guards, accompanied this chief. We prepared for their reception by sounding the trumpets and beating the drums of our cavalry and infantry, and putting all the suite, European and native, in regular array.

When the parties were within twenty yards of each other they halted, and Nou Rôz Khan prepared to dismount. The Elchee did the same. The latter poised himself a moment in the stirrup, lest his foot should be on the ground before that of the Persian nobleman, which would have marked inferiority. But the soldier-like movements of Nou Rôz Khan showed at once he was a manly fellow, and no stickler about ceremonies. He not only dismounted with expedition, but hastened, before the Elchee had time to quit his horse, to come forward and welcome the guest of his sovereign.

We had all dismounted at the instant the Elchee did, and after mutual introduction the whole party were again on their march, the Elchee and Nou Rôz Khan riding exactly parallel, and their attendants a little in the rear, nearer or more remote, according to their respective ranks.

On the plain which we passed, before coming to the capital, some of the guards of the king displayed their skill in horsemanship. They threw the Jerreed* at each other with excellent aim; and it was often only avoided by extraordinary activity, the horseman sometimes to all appearance throwing himself from his horse, while the jerreed whizzed over him.

Another exercise, called the Doghela-Bâzee, is performed by the rider holding a stick little more than a yard long in his hand, one end of which he throws with great force on the ground, on the near side of the horse when at full gallop; the direction given by this stroke causes it to rebound over the horse's head, and the rider catches it while yet whirling round in the air.

* A wooden javelin.

But of all these exhibitions, that which pleased me most was the skill they displayed as marksmen. When at full speed, the rider throws a lemon over his head, and twisting his body completely round to the left, fires at it from the off-flank of the horse,* almost always with good aim, and often hitting it. This appeared to me, as combining the different motions of the horse, the rider, and the lemon, quite wonderful, but, like other surprising feats, it is the result of constant practice; for the child in Persia commences this exercise at six or seven years of age, and it is never abandoned, while there is strength left to sit upon a horse and to pull a trigger.

The crowds of people we now saw announced that we were in the suburbs of Teheran. I heard Aga Meer whisper the Elchee, "You have yet ten minutes,—a little slower." "Quicker!" was afterwards pronounced in an under tone. Again I heard "Slower!" then "Now!" and the charger of the Elchee put his foot over the threshold of the gate of Teheran. "Al hamd-ool-illâh! Thanks be to God!" said the Meer, with a delighted countenance; "it was the very moment,—how fortunate!" This joy, and the expression of it, told all to Nou Rôz Khan, who evidently deemed the proceeding as a matter of course; and when he heard the name of the astrologer who was consulted at Isfahan, he seemed to think, after such a happy moment of arrival, there could be no doubt of the fulfilment of his predictions. This sentiment was general among the Persians in our suite. Some of them might have doubted the sincerity of the Elchee's belief in the occult sciences, but even these were

* The modern Persian horseman has changed the bow of his ancestors for a matchlock, but the mode of using his arms is the same. The Parthians are described, in their successful contests with the disciplined legions of Rome, as carrying on their attacks, not against the army but the supplies by which it was supported.

"The mode in which the Parthian warrior took his unerring aim, while his horse was carrying him from his enemy," says the author of the History of Persia, "may be viewed as a personification of the system of warfare by which his nation, during this era of its history, maintained its independence. The system was suited to the soil, to the man, and to the fleet and robust animal on which he was mounted; and its success was so certain, that the bravest veterans of Rome murmured when their leaders talked of a Parthian war."—History of Persia, vol. i. p. 88.

pleased at the consideration given to what he deemed their prejudices.

One day after the treaties were concluded, I heard the prime minister say, with a smile, to the Elchee, "You see, with all your European knowledge, of what consequence it is to attend to a Persian astrologer, who instructs you to fight us with our own weapons, the stars and planets."

On entering Teheran, we were conducted through the streets to the house of the prime minister, Hajee Ibrahim. Here Nou Rôz Khan left us; but we were welcomed at the gate of the dwelling by several of the friends and principal members of the minister's family, and we had hardly seated ourselves, when the Hajee was announced as coming to visit his guests.

My curiosity to see this extraordinary man was very great. "There must," I thought, "be something wonderful in the appearance as well as in the mind of that human being, who, by the mere force of his character, has raised himself from the rank of an humble magistrate in the city of Shiraz, to be a 'puller-down and setter-up of kings;' who, without any pretensions to military talent, and without learning sufficient to write a note or read three lines, has overcome heroes, has established sovereigns on the throne of Persia, and by his firmness and wisdom has given a peace and tranquillity to his native land beyond what it has known for a century."

The Persians are a handsome race of men, and fond of decorating their persons. I expected therefore to see Hajee Ibrahim enter elegantly dressed, with a dignified if not an elastic step, with a commanding figure, a clear animated countenance, with features expressive of his superior character: and, above all, with two piercing eyes, distinguished perhaps by that restless wandering from object to object, which indicates the care and anxiety of a man who held power and life by so precarious a tenure as a prime minister of Persia.

We all arose as he was announced, and the Elchee went forward to meet him. Judge of my surprise when I saw, instead of the magnificent personage of my imagination, a heavy-looking man, dressed in very plain clothes, enter the room, and proceed towards his seat, with a rolling of the body that almost approached to a waddle. His features were rather coarse, and his

eyes, though clear, had nothing of the piercing or searching qualities I had anticipated. As to his manners, they did not appear to have changed with his condition, but to be still those of a respectable citizen of Shiraz. I was, I must confess, quite disappointed; but before the half hour expired, which he passed in conversation with the Elchee, my mind had undergone another change, for there was in all he said a good sense, a sincerity, and a strength, that quite convinced me of the justice of the fame he had acquired.

The Hajee's brother, Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, came the day after our arrival to pay his respects to the Elchee. An attempt was made by the steward of the minister's household to obtain more deference for this person than he was from his rank entitled to. "The Hajee," said the politic major-domo, "always gives the seat of honour to Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, who is his elder brother!" "He is right in so doing," said the Elchee; "but this gentleman is not my elder brother." The reply indicated a knowledge of the relations on which precedence was to be given or refused, which terminated the discussion. In came Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, a very fat and dull man, whose merit appeared limited to that of being brother to a prime minister. He took his seat very contentedly; staid half an hour; spoke half a sentence—and retired.

The first night I passed at Hajee Ibrahim's, I was disturbed by a continued mumbling and confused noise in the next apartment, which, upon inquiry, I found proceeded from the extreme piety of its inmate, Zâl Khan of Khisht.

This remarkable man had established a great name in his native mountains, betwixt Abusheher and Shiraz; and he was long distinguished as one of the bravest and most attached followers of the Zend family. When the death of Lootf Ali Khan terminated its power, he, along with the other governors of provinces and districts in Fars, submitted to Aga Mahomed Khan. That cautious and cruel monarch, dreading the ability, and doubtful of the allegiance of this chief, ordered his eyes to be put out: an appeal for the recall of the sentence being treated with disdain, Zâl Khan loaded the tyrant with curses. "Cut out his tongue," was the second order. This mandate was imperfectly executed; and the loss of half this member deprived him of

speech. Being afterwards persuaded that its being cut close to the root would enable him to speak so as to be understood, he submitted to the operation, and the effect has been, that his voice, though indistinct and thick, is yet intelligible to persons accustomed to converse with him. This I experienced from daily intercourse. He often spoke to me of his sufferings, and of the humanity of the present king, who had restored him to his situation as head of his tribe, and governor of Khisht.

I am not an anatomist, and cannot therefore give a reason why a man, who could not articulate with half a tongue, should speak when he had none at all; but the facts are as stated, and I had them from the very best authority, old Zâl Khan himself.

Some points of no small consequence underwent discussion the day after we reached Teheran. The Persian language is very copious, and has many terms which, though signifying in substance the same, have a shade of difference in the application, which enables those versed in such matters to use them so as to denote the rank and respective relations of the parties who hold intercourse with each other. For instance, the word friendship may be expressed by three or four terms, which imply superiority, equality, or inferiority. The speaker may, by the manner in which he introduces the expression "I have a regard for you" —"I esteem your friendship"—"My duty always attends you" —or, "My service is at your command," mark the respect or relation in which he holds him whom he addresses. These are in Persia, as with us, expressions of courtesy; but in that country the subject meets much more attention than we give it, and especially in all communications with a foreign envoy.

Both the Elchee and his host, Hajee Ibrahim, might have smiled inwardly at the trifling nature of such forms, but the relation in which they stood towards each made it necessary to observe them; and as the terms they used in conversation were likely to serve as a standard to others, it was judged necessary to have a congress of meerzâs or secretaries, skilled in such niceties, to settle this important point.

Two very formal men were deputed by the minister; and Aga Meer and Mahomed Hoosein, the Indian Moonshee, attended on the part of the Elchee. The negotiation was opened on the admitted basis of perfect equality of rank between the parties.

Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of the subject, much discussion ensued. My Indian friend gave me a full account of it. "The minister's meerzâs," said he, "endeavoured to establish points which, though seemingly trivial, would have given a shade of superiority to their master which I would not admit: they rather alarmed Aga Meer, who, being a Persian, could not be expected to stand up against them, at the hazard of giving offence to those of his country who were in power: but what did I care," said Mahomed Hoosein, swelling with the part he had acted at this conference, "for their prime ministers? I know no superiors but my master and the English government.

"They told me," he added, "that by giving now and then a term of respect to Hajee Ibrahim, more than he received, the Elchee would add to the consequence of that minister, and not diminish his own, as they were informed that people in England cared little about such matters. I told them, however, that the Elchee, in all he did or said, considered the impressions he was to make in Persia, not in England, and that he would abandon no claims to respect, even in matters of the slightest word or form, which tended in any manner to affect his representative character with the nation to which he was sent.

"Seeing," said the good Moonshee,* "that nothing was to be gained from me, they came at last to an amicable arrangement." The word friendship, which implies perfect equality, may be used in common conversation; but occasionally the terms, "my duty waits upon you," or, "my service is at your command," are to be introduced, with this express provision, that whenever one party in the excess of his politeness uses them, the other is to take the earliest opportunity of doing the same. This rule is also to be particularly observed in the important phrases of "you represented," "you said," or, "you commanded." "You said," is settled as the term of equality; but "you commanded," it is agreed, may be frequently interchanged, as tending to show the great respect the parties entertain for each other.

* This excellent man is living on a small estate in his native country, the northern Circars, granted for his services in Persia and other quarters. He accompanied his old master, the Elchee, in the campaign in India of 1817-18; and in consideration of this further service to the public, his estate has been settled upon his children.

Possessed of this information, I watched the first interview of those for whom this arrangement was made with no little interest. I noticed that the Elchee replied immediately to the first concession made by Hajee Ibrahim by a similar expression: but when he himself made one some time afterwards, which did not meet with so prompt a return, I was amused to see him retreat upon his terms of equality. This had the desired effect. No more encroachments were made upon his dignity; and from his conduct on this occasion, and others of similar importance, he was no doubt considered by the Persians as a most accomplished diplomatist!

The termination of this battle of words at Teheran, added to that of forms at Shiraz, were happy preparations for the discussions regarding the ceremonies of presentation to the king; but these will be noticed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Terms of Reception at Court—Second Visit—Delivery of Presents—King's Grant—Private Interviews—King's Ancestors—Crown Jewels—King's love of a Joke—Mode of Passing his Time—Harem—Royal Meals—Hajee Ibrahim—His Character and Death.

THE Elchee's reputation as a man conversant with forms, and much alive to their importance in all diplomatic proceedings, smoothed the way for the settlement he had to make regarding his reception at court. There were still, however, many minor points to be arranged which required much grave discussion. One presented itself on the very threshold of this negotiation, with which we were all highly amused.

Many observations had been made on our dress at Shiraz, but no records existed at the provincial capital, which could authorise the minister of the prince to object to the Elchee's being presented in his uniform. The outward appearance of our heads, the hair of which had been recently cropped, obtained us high compliments, at the expense of our friends the Russians. That nation had some years before invaded the territory of Persia, and its troops were then threatening another attack. The consequence was a very hostile feeling towards it amongst the courtiers and ministers of the king of kings. Chirâgh Ali Khan, when we were at Shiraz, dilated on our habits as much more cleanly than our Christian brethren of the north. "They delight in nothing," said he, "but strong liquor and hogs' flesh; and, would you believe it?" addressing himself to the Elchee, "they are so fond of the vile animal on which they live, that they actually tie their hair in a form which resembles its tail." The Elchee looked as if incredulous of this last usage, though it was, to my knowledge, not more than a twelvemonth since his own head had been shorn of the ornament held in such abomination.

From what had passed, we thought that we were safe on the point of dress; but we were mistaken. Two days after our arrival at Isfahan, a meerzâ came on the part of Hajee Ibrahim, to speak to the Elchee on this subject. After many apologies and explanations regarding the minute attention to ceremonies at the Persian court, he observed, that it even related to dress; and as the Elchee was to be presented to the king, it was expected he would put on garments suited to the occasion. The Elchee replied, he did not know what was meant, but that he could wear no dress except that of his country; and being a soldier, he wore the uniform belonging to his station in the army. The Meerzâ smiled, and said they were better informed upon such subjects than the Elchee imagined. He then produced a parcel; and after opening a number of envelopes, he showed several small pictures of embassadors who had visited Persia two centuries ago. One, which was called the painting of the English representative, and believed to be Sir Anthony Shirley, was dressed in the full costume of the time of Queen Elizabeth. "This," said the Meerzâ, "is the pattern which it is hoped you will adopt, as his majesty desires to follow in all points the usages of the Seffavean kings, since they well understood what was due to the dignity of the throne of Persia."

The Elchee could not help smiling at this proposition; but seeing the Meerzâ look grave, he begged pardon, and told him, that when he saw Hajee Ibrahim he would satisfy him fully on this subject. The minister came soon afterwards into the room, and was much entertained at the account of the changes which fashion had made in our dress, since the days of good Queen Bess. "Well, well," said he, in his short but forcible manner, "our habits are so different from yours on this point that the mistake is not surprising; and though I do not altogether like a usage which makes children laugh at the garments of their grandfathers, every country has a right to its own customs, and to these its representatives should adhere. I must," he said in a whisper, "plague you a little on such points, for I have a bad name, from not being a stickler for forms; and I shall trust," he added, "to your good nature to allow me to establish my character."

The marching with fixed bayonets, drawn swords, and trumpets

sounding, to the great gate of the palace, the spot where he was to dismount—the manner in which he was to approach the king, and the place where he was to sit, were all settled to the satisfaction of the Elchee. An objection was at first made to the suite being seated, but numerous books as well as pictures were produced, to prove the usage of the Seffavean monarchs on this head, and the point was conceded.

There was much and serious discussion as to the rank of the person to be appointed to meet the Elchee at the entrance room, where, according to etiquette, he must remain till his majesty was announced as ready to receive him.

Sûlimân Khan Kajir, first cousin and son-in-law of the king, and who had at one period aspired to the throne, was the person fixed upon to act this part of the drama. No compliment could be greater to the embassy than its being assigned to him; but there was one drawback—it was urged, that the said Sûlimân Khan was of too high rank to rise from his seat to receive any man upon earth, except the king, or a prince of the blood-royal; he was besides Lord of the Court,* an office which gave him the place of majesty itself when the king was absent. Notwithstanding these pretensions, it was agreed that he should make a slight movement, or a half rise, when the Elchee entered the room, and that the latter should seat himself on the carpet on a footing of equality.

Everything being arranged, we proceeded towards the "Threshold of the World's Glory," on the morning of the sixteenth of November, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred! We were all dressed in our best attire. A crowd had assembled near the house of Hajee Ibrahim, and the streets were filled with gazers at the strangers.

The infantry part of the escort, with their drum and fifes, and all the Hindustannee public servants in scarlet and gold, preceded the Elchee, who rode a beautiful Arabian horse richly caparisoned, but entirely in the English style; he was followed by the gentlemen of his suite and his escort of cavalry.

When we came within half a mile of the palace all was silence and order: it was the state of Asia with the discipline of Europe. We passed through rows of men and horses; and

* Deevân-Beg.

even the latter appeared as if afraid to shake their heads. Many persons whom we saw in the first square of the citadel, before we entered the palace, were richly dressed, and some of the horses were decked out with bridles, saddles, and trappings of great value; but it was not until we passed the last gate of the palace, and came into the garden in front of the king's hall of audience, a highly ornamented and spacious building, that we could form any idea of the splendour of the Persian court.

A canal flowed in the centre of a garden, which supplied a number of fountains, to the right and left of which were broad paved walks, and beyond these were rows of trees. Between the trees and the high wall encircling the palace files of matchlock-men were drawn up; and within the avenues, from the gate to the hall of audience, all the princes, nobles, courtiers, and officers of state, were marshalled in separate lines, according to their rank, from the lowest officer of the king's guard, who occupied the place nearest the entrance, to the heir apparent, Abbas Meerzâ, who stood on the right of his brothers, and within a few paces of the throne.

There was not one person in all this array who had not a gold-hilted sword, a Cashmere shawl round his cap, and another round his waist. Many of the princes and nobles were magnificently dressed, but all was forgotten as soon as the eye rested upon the king.

He appeared to be above the middle size, his age little more than thirty, his complexion rather fair; his features were regular and fine, with an expression denoting quickness and intelligence. His beard attracted much of our attention; it was full, black, and glossy, and flowed to his middle. His dress baffled all description. The ground of his robes was white; but he was so covered with jewels of an extraordinary size, and their splendour, from his being seated where the rays of the sun played upon them, was so dazzling, that it was impossible to distinguish the minute parts which combined to give such amazing brilliancy to his whole figure.

The two chief officers of ceremonies, who carried golden sticks, stopped twice, as they advanced towards the throne, to make a low obeisance, and the Elchee at the same time took off his hat. When near the entrance of the hall the procession

stopped, and the lord of requests said, "Captain John Malcolm is come, as envoy from the governor-general of India to your majesty." The king, looking to the Elchee, said, in a pleasing and manly voice, "You are welcome."*

We then ascended the steps of the hall, and were seated, as had been previously arranged. The letter from the governor-general, which had been carried in the procession on a golden tray, was opened and read. His majesty inquired after the health of the king of England and of the ruler of India. He desired particularly to know how the Elchee had been treated in his dominions, and whether he liked what he had seen of Persia?

To all these questions appropriate answers were returned; and we left his majesty, after being seated about twenty minutes, very much gratified by our reception, and with an assurance from our mehmandar,† which was afterwards confirmed by the prime minister, that the king of kings was highly pleased with the mission, the state and splendour of which he could not but feel added to his reputation, and gave him fame and popularity with his own subjects.

Several days passed before our second visit to court, when the Elchee carried the presents from the governor-general, some of which were very valuable, particularly the pier-glasses, which have been already mentioned. A change was made in this second visit; we were not stopped as before at the room, where we were met by Sûlimân Khan Kajir, that chief having failed in showing the Elchee proper respect, by not rising when he went in or out of the apartment; and to prevent further disputes, the ceremony of stopping, in our progress towards the throne, was altogether dispensed with. The court was still more fully attended than before, and the king, if possible, more magnificently dressed.

After we had been seated a short time, the presents were announced. I was a little anxious when one of the ministers began to read the list. There had been a great desire to give them a name which denoted inferiority of rank on the part of the person from whom they were sent; but the Elchee would not allow of any such term being used, and he told the prime

* Khoosh-Amedee.

† Fatteh Ali Khan Noovee.

minister, that if any attempt of the kind were made, he would, notwithstanding the strict etiquette of the Persian court, instantly address the king, and tell him, that the presents he brought were neither tribute nor offerings, as his secretary had from inadvertence called them, but rarities and curiosities sent from the British ruler of India, in token of his regard and friendship for the king of Persia. This communication had the desired effect; our presents were termed rarities, and the high rank of the governor-general, as a person intrusted with sovereign functions, was on this occasion upheld.

This visit was at its commencement very formal, but the king, evidently desirous to give it another character, said to the Elchee, "I have heard a report which I cannot believe, that your king has only one wife." "No Christian prince can have more," said the Elchee. "O, I know that! but he may have a little lady."* "Our gracious king, George the Third, replied the Envoy, "is an example to his subjects of attention to morality and religion in this respect, as in every other." "This may all be very proper," concluded his majesty of Persia, laughing, "but I certainly should not like to be king of such a country."

A curious incident occurred as we left the palace. The king's giant, a man above eight feet high, and stout in proportion, was placed against one of the walls of the gate through which we were to retire, and he had in his hand a club of enormous dimensions. It was expected that the Elchee, on seeing him, would start with astonishment if not alarm; but he passed without taking any notice of this redoubtable personage, except by a slight glance. The fact was, as he afterwards confessed, it never entered into his imagination that it was a human being. Paintings of Roostem and his club (which the giant was dressed to imitate) are very common in Persia, and in the hurry of passing he took this to be one. He was first made sensible of his mistake by the praises of his mehmandar. "Admirable!" said the latter to him: "nothing could be better: the fools wished to try to startle you with giants and clubs stuck up against a wall. They are rightly served; your eye hardly rested on him for a moment, evidently not thinking him worthy of your notice. I

* "Amma Keneezekee," the expression used by his majesty, means literally—But a little lady.

shall tell them," he added, with a feeling that showed he considered his honour was associated with that of the person of whom he had charge, "that such men are quite common in your country, and that this giant would hardly be tall enough for one of the guards of the king of England."

Before we left Teheran the Envoy had several interviews with the king, at all of which his majesty was gracious; and at some, which were private, he spoke a great deal, and was very inquisitive into the habits and usages of England, and the character of its government.

Speaking of the empire of India, he asked, if it were true that ten ships were sent every year from that country to England loaded with gold and silver? The Elchee said it was very rare any bullion was sent from our territories in the East to England; that whatever went was in merchandise. "What a lie," said his majesty, "the Envoy * who preceded you told me; but," (seeing the Elchee annoyed,) "do not vex yourself, it is not your shame but ours; your predecessor was a Persian, and we all exaggerate—you speak truth. But why did you send a Persian to my court? I suppose," continuing to answer himself, "it was to find out what kind of a being I was, and whether my country was settled, before you deputed one of your own nation."

"Are the French," he asked, "a powerful people?" "Certainly," replied the Envoy; "they would not otherwise deserve to be mentioned as the enemies of the English." "There again," said the king, turning to his ministers, "you know we were told that the French were a weak and contemptible nation, which was incredible: the Elchee, by telling the truth, has done them justice, and raised his own country at the same time."

After a number of questions on the mines of South America, and the arts and manufactures of Europe, the king said, "All this is astonishing! Persia has nothing but steel." "Steel well managed," said the Elchee, "has, from the beginning of the world to the present day, commanded all other riches." "Very true," said the king, quite pleased with this compliment; "that is a very just observation; therefore we must not complain, but

* Mehdee Ali Khan, a Persian gentleman, who had been deputed the year before to Persia by Mr. Duncan, Governor of Bombay.

continue to be contented, as our ancestors have been, with our swords and our lances."

The king had learned that the Elchee, in his conversation with the minister, had displayed considerable acquaintance with the past history of his family at Asterabad, and his curiosity being excited, he sent to desire his attendance. We were received in a private apartment, in which there were only a few courtiers, but there were several Kajir chiefs, and four or five elders* of that tribe.

The interrogation began; and as the Elchee derived his knowledge from that minute and truth-telling traveller, Jonas Hanway, his answers quite surprised all present; and when he informed them, not only of the events which happened fifty-six† years before, but gave them accounts of the personal appearance, the dispositions, the connections, and the characters of the different chiefs, the astonishment of the elders was expressed by the frequent repetition of "Yâ Ali," an ejaculation that, in the mouth of a Persian, attends all sudden emotions of wonder. The king was more than pleased, he was delighted; he evidently believed, from the Elchee's knowledge of the history of his family, that their fame had reached Europe, and that it was as well known to the nations of that quarter of the globe as to the Tûrkûmâns of Goorgân, or the natives of Mazenderan.

The Elchee on this occasion told the truth, but not the whole truth. The character of the court in which he was giving evidence did not perhaps require the latter, and it might have lessened the pleasure imparted, to have spoken of the plundered bales of cloth, and the dread of being made over to the Tûrkûmâns, which had so fixed the recollection of his majesty's family in the mind of poor Jonas Hanway. As it was, the king was delighted, and conversed familiarly on various subjects. Amongst others, he inquired very particularly into the frame of the English government.

The Elchee explained it to him as well as he could. When he spoke of the liberty of the subject, his majesty was puzzled to

* "Reesh-e-Seffeed," literally grey-beard, is the Persian term for an elder.

† Jonas Hanway was at Astrabad in 1744, during the rebellion of the ancestor of the present king.

understand what it meant; but on being told it implied, that no man was so high in England as to be able to do anything contrary to the law of the land; and no man so low, but that he might do everything not contrary to that law, he appeared to comprehend this, as well as the other points which had been explained to him.

"I understand all you have said," he observed; and after some reflection, he added—"Your king is, I see, only the first magistrate of the country."* "Your majesty," said the Elchee, "has exactly defined his situation." "Such a condition of power," said he, smiling, "has permanence, but it has no enjoyment: mine is enjoyment. There you see Sûlimân Khan Kajir, and several other of the first chiefs of the kingdom—I can cut all their heads off: can I not?" said he, addressing them. "Assuredly, 'Point of adoration of the world,'† if it is your pleasure."

"That is real power," said the king; "but then it has no permanence. When I am gone, my sons will fight for the crown, and all will be confusion: there is, however, one consolation, Persia will be governed by a soldier."

The king, at this visit, appeared in great good humour with the Elchee, and gratified the latter by showing him his richest jewels, amongst which was the "sea of light,"‡ which is deemed one of the purest and most valuable diamonds in the world. Many of the others were surprisingly splendid.

On the evening after this visit, my excellent friend, whom I have before mentioned as preferring a shot at a duck to a view of the ruins of Persepolis, said he would like to be king of Persia. Knowing that inordinate ambition had no place in his mind, I asked him what he would do if he attained that station: "Run away with my crown," was the prompt answer. We had a hearty

* "Ket-khûdâ-e-avvel."

† "Kibla-e-Alem," is the universal term his subjects apply when speaking to the king of Persia. Kibla is the point to which Mahomedans turn when they pray: Alem signifies the world.

‡ The Deriâ-e-Noor, or sea of light, weighs 186 carats, and is considered to be the diamond of the finest lustre in the world. The Tâj-e-Mâh, or "crown of the moon," is also a splendid diamond; it weighs 146 carats. These two are the principal in a pair of bracelets, valued at near a million sterling. Those in the crown are also of extraordinary size and value.

laugh at the genuine simplicity of this expression. It is perhaps the first time sovereignty was ever desired for such a purpose; but, considering all that attends, in Persia, the wearing of the article he wished for, it would perhaps be the best mode of converting to real advantage so dangerous and precarious a possession.

The condition of Fatteh Ali Shâh, at the time I first saw him, was deemed, by his Mahomedan subjects, as fortunate as could be attained by any human being in this world. He added to youth and personal endowments, four wives, more ladies than I will venture to name, and nearly one hundred children, the possession of a splendid throne, and the prospect of living long to enjoy it, for his cruel but able uncle, Aga Mahomed, had destroyed all who were likely to dispute his possession of the crown. "He had," to use his own words, "raised a royal palace, and cemented it with blood, that the boy Bâbâ Khan (the name he always gave his nephew) might sleep within its walls in peace."

The king has elegant manners and many accomplishments. Among others, he is a poet, and has written a book of odes, of the merits of which the critics of Persia speak in perfect raptures. I only wish I had the same power that he possesses of disarming severity and propitiating favour. What a magnifying glass would then be applied to these pages, now doomed, I fear, to be viewed through a reversed telescope, which will make them appear so diminutive as hardly to be worth the trouble of perusing. But to return to his majesty of Persia.

I made all the inquiries I could into his usual habits and mode of passing his time. He is very regular in the execution of his public duties; and being a king of Persia is no sinecure. He must have two courts every day; one public, and another private. He receives at the first the salutations of all his sons, nobles, ministers, and public officers; and at this public levee strangers are presented. At the second, in which his ministers and favourites only attend, business is transacted.

The present king, like many of the same age and temperament, makes up, by the employment of his leisure moments, for the forms and restraints which usage imposes upon him when before the eye of the public. He pursues with great ardour the sports of the field, is an excellent horseman, and a good shot.

Being fond of his fame as a literary man, he devotes some time to the society of the learned, and enjoys hearing poetry and entertaining stories recited. He has, however, I am told, more boyish amusements, in which those of his favourite attendants and domestics, who join, are admitted to great familiarity. The age and character of Hajee Ibrahim have naturally inspired the king with some awe; and it is not an uncommon joke, when his majesty is at high romps, for some privileged person to exclaim, "Hajee! Hajee!" as if the minister were seen approaching: the word is certain to act as a talisman; all are grave and in their places in a moment, till a laugh from the successful wit proclaims that it is only a jest.

I had an opportunity of observing that the king is very fond of having a laugh at the expense of his gravest ministers and highest nobles; and Hajee Ibrahim assured me, he had never seen him more delighted than by the opportunity of indulging in this vein, afforded by two occurrences connected with our party.

Sûlimân Khan Kajir, of whose unbending dignity I have already spoken, feeling himself unwell, sent to request that the surgeon of the English mission might attend him. That gentleman went; but as he could not speak Persian, he was accompanied by the relation of the Elchee before noticed. This cherished friend of mine (who is now, alas! no more) was, from his knowledge of the language and his pleasing manners, a general favourite at court, and was distinguished by the Mahomedan appellation of Feiz-Ali, which had been given from its resemblance, in their ears, to his English name. The Persian chief received and treated him and the doctor with such repulsive coldness and pride, that when he desired a second visit they were unwilling to return; but the Elchee, anxious to pay every attention to so near a relation of the king, insisted upon their going. Their reception this time was exactly opposite to what it was before. Sûlimân Khan insisted upon their sitting near him, treated him with sweetmeats and coffee, and laughed at the doctor, whom he desired to cure a bad eye he had with the touch of his finger; and on his being answered with a declaration of inability, said he was rejoiced to find that European physicians

had not that magical power with which his countrymen in their ignorance vested them.

The two gentlemen returned just as we were on the point of sitting down to dinner with Hajee Ibrahim. "Well," said the minister, addressing the Elchee's relation, "how did you find Sûlimân Khan?" All that had passed was repeated. "Why," said the Hajee, "the Khan must have been drunk." "Very possibly," replied my friend; "all I can say is, he was very polite and very pleasant, and I regret much that he was not drunk at the first visit we paid him."

The Hajee was highly diverted with this reply, which he repeated to the king the same evening; and we learnt that his majesty next day rallied his relation with great effect, telling him Feiz-Ali had said he was "a pleasant companion, and a very polite gentleman, when he was drunk!"

The other occurrence occasioned still more mirth to the "king of kings." A number of the first nobles and ministers solicited, and were permitted, to give dinners to the Elchee. Amongst these was a near relation of his majesty, called Mahomed Hoosein Khan. It was expected that this nobleman would visit the Elchee; but he did not pay this mark of respect. The consequence was, the Elchee wrote to decline the honour of waiting upon him. This caused the greatest confusion: Hajee Ibrahim was sent for several times by the king, and at last brought a message, intimating, that if the Elchee would give way on this occasion, his majesty would deem it a personal favour, and would take care he should never again be placed in such a situation. The Hajee added his own entreaties, saying, "If you do not go, the indignity put upon this proud Kajir chief will be exclusively ascribed to my advice." Consideration for the minister weighed more with the Elchee than all other motives, and he agreed to recall his excuse, stating, that he did so at the express desire of the king.

The Elchee, when he entered the dinner apartment, though he must have known his host by the dignified distance at which he sat from his guests, nevertheless, choosing to mark the absurdity of going to dine with a man with whose person he was unacquainted, turned to the mehmandar, and said, "Which of

these Omrahs is Mahomed Hoosein Khan Doodâkee?" The poor mehmandar was so confounded that he could only answer by pointing to the personage inquired after, who now advanced with an air of offended pride, while the whole assembly looked astounded.

Notwithstanding this bad beginning, the party went off very well, chiefly owing to the pleasant manners and information of the minister, Rizâ Koolee Khan, who exerted himself not a little to promote good humour.

We were not aware, till we returned home, of one cause of the surprise which the interrogation, addressed to the mehmandar, had occasioned. The Elchee, who understood Persian, was wholly ignorant of Turkish, and consequently did not know that the title of Doodâkee, which he gave to his host, from having heard him so called, was not one of honour, but a nickname, signifying "Thick-lip," which he had received from the conformation of that feature, and which was useful in distinguishing him from a hundred other Mahomed Hoosein Khans belonging to the Turkish tribe of Kajir.

The king, we were informed, was delighted with this story, and used sometime afterward, when our host was standing amongst other chiefs near the throne, to exclaim, "Which of all these Omrahs is Mahomed Hoosein Khan Doodâkee?"

The king passes some hours of every day in the seraglio, or ladies' apartments. If the character of my little work permitted, I could here give the rein to my imagination, and create scenes, which however unreal might still please and interest many of my readers. I could paint Circassians and Georgians of surpassing beauty—clothe them in robes and jewels of unparalleled splendour—give to some the fond but unavailing regrets of past but not unforgotten early attachments—and to others the pangs of jealousy, and a torturing sense of love changed for neglect. I could devise well-planned intrigues, hair-breadth escapes, and hint at murders committed, where no eye could see, and no tongue could tell the tale of horror; but all these exciting subjects are forbidden me, by a stupid rule I have laid down, which compels me, in all that I personally relate, to limit myself to facts.

From what I have heard of the seraglio of the King of

Persia, many forms observed in it are the same as in the outer apartments.

The king, like all good Mahomedans, rises early, as the first prayer must be said at dawn of day; he is aided in his toilet by female attendants. After he is dressed he holds a levee, at which more than three hundred ladies of different ranks are present: each, according to her rank or favour, standing nearer or farther from the throne. Two only, I am informed, have the privilege of being seated—the mother of the heir-apparent, and the daughter of Ibrahim Khan of Sheesha.

There are in the seraglio female officers of every description. A Lady of Requests, a Lady of the Ceremonies, and my Lady Chief Constable. One duty of the first is to introduce the young strangers to the notice of their lord and sovereign; the second marshals all in their station, according to their dignity or consideration; and the third is armed with an authority which, if fame speaks true, is not unfrequently called into action.

The influence of many of the ladies is very great. The mothers of the princes who are employed in distant provinces usually accompany their sons, and contrive, by intrigue, to preserve that power which their charms once gave them: almost all these pay the king annual visits.

There are bands of singers and dancers, drolls and mimics, within the walls of the inner apartments, who contribute both to his majesty's amusement and that of his ladies. There are also females who traffic in different wares, and many of these have the privilege of going out and coming in at pleasure.

The King of Persia can only, according to law, marry four wives: these are selected from considerations of policy, not of affection. They are upon a very different footing from any of the other ladies in the seraglio; they have separate establishments, and are always objects of attention and respect, though seldom perhaps of affection. But real love can hardly be imagined to have ever found a dwelling amid such scenes as have been described; yet I was told a short but affecting tale, with so many circumstances to confirm its truth, that I could hardly doubt but the king of kings once knew the meaning of this sacred word.

A young dancing-girl from Shiraz, named Tootee,* was raised from a humble rank to a place in the royal seraglio. Tootee, who from her profession must in her earliest years have been seen by many, is said to have been of an elegant and delicate form, with a fine voice, and a face that indicated feeling and intelligence. She gained the heart of her royal lover, and, according to fame, gave him all her own in return. While she lived, others were neglected; but this fair flower soon drooped and died. The grief of the king was excessive. He directed her to be interred near the shrine of the holy Shâh Abd-ool-Azeem, which is within five miles of the capital. His visits to this shrine have, since this event, become much more frequent than before; whether they are from respect to the remains of the saint, or from fond regret of his beloved Tootee, cannot be determined; but he is often observed to sit upon her tomb, in the apparent enjoyment of a melancholy pleasure.

Notwithstanding the habits of his condition, and the severe and cruel acts to which that has often led him, there is naturally a kind disposition in the present King of Persia, which has made me always regard him as deserving of estimation, and I cannot but take an interest in all that personally concerns him.

It is from such feelings, that the short history and fate of Tootee have ever interested me. I have been gratified to think, that the mind of one I desired to hold in regard was not so completely corrupted and polluted by sensual indulgence and luxury, as to be a stranger to a passion which, in any shape that approaches to purity, softens and enrobles man, far beyond all other sentiments that are associated with his happiness in this world.

The king leaves his inner apartments at eight o'clock. An hour or two before breakfast is passed with his favourite companions, of whom Mahomed Hoosein Khan Mervee is, as he merits to be, the most distinguished, both from his rank and superior qualities.

The breakfast for his majesty is served in great state, and the dishes are of pure gold: this meal is usually at ten in the morning, and dinner at eight in the evening.

* "Tootee," is the Persian word for a parrot, a bird which is prominent in Persian tales for its knowledge and habits of attachment.

The trays which contain the royal meals are sealed up by the head of the household, an office of great trust; and while this precaution is taken against poison, a physician attends lest the royal appetite should be indulged to an excess that might injure health. I fear, however, this wise man is not so successful in enforcing abstemiousness as he who watched over the renowned sovereign of Barrataria!

No person is allowed to eat with the king, but he has generally one or two of his youngest sons near him, to whom he gives of the dishes which he thinks they like best; he also, at times, as a mark of great favour, sends victuals dressed for himself to others. The Elchee was often honoured with presents of bread, rice, and pillaw. These specimens of culinary art satisfied me, that his majesty's cooks merited all the praises I had heard bestowed on them.

When the first mission took its departure from Teheran, the king was most gracious. We all received fine dresses from his majesty: that given to the Elchee was most splendid; and he had besides a handsome horse, and a dagger richly set with jewels. There was much anxiety that he should dress in these robes; but though he expressed himself willing to wear any of them which could be put over his own clothes, he could not, he said, put off any part of his uniform. The king, very good-humouredly, alluded to his tenacity in this particular, at our last visit: "You were unjust to your own appearance, Elchee," said he; "had you put on the cap I sent, you would have looked one of the tallest men in Persia."

The leave we took of Hajee Ibrahim was marked by some circumstances which made it truly affecting. This extraordinary man had become very intimate with the Elchee, to whom he communicated his anticipation of being soon put to death. "The king and his ministers," said he, "are all anxious to destroy me. Your arrival has delayed for a time the execution of their designs, but it is only for a short period. I could easily save myself; but Persia would again be plunged in warfare. My object," he continued, "has been to give my country one king; I cared not whether he was a Zend or a Kajir, so that there was an end of internal distraction. I have seen enough of these scenes of blood; I will be concerned in no more of them. I

hope I have made my peace with God, and shall therefore die contented."

The Elchee, who had succeeded in effecting an outward reconciliation between Hajee Ibrahim and the other ministers, Meerzâ Seffee and Meerzâ Rizâ Koolee, took this opportunity of beseeching his friend to treat these personages with more consideration and respect. He also earnestly exhorted him to bear with more temper than he did the occasional fits of ill-humour and violence of the king.

"I cannot alter my nature," said the Hajee; "it is plain and downright: besides, the conduct you recommend would be of no use; it would only precipitate my fate. The fears of my enemies would lead them to conclude that it covered some deep design."

This conversation passed two days before our departure; and the day on which it occurred the Hajee appeared very melancholy. The Elchee had been in the habit of taking great notice of, and playing with, the minister's youngest son, a fine boy of five years of age. The child, who was well trained in Persian etiquette, had remained quiet till he saw the Elchee move towards the door; he then ran after him, and in trying to lay hold of his clothes, fell on his face, and burst into tears. The Hajee, forgetting all forms in parental feeling, ran forward also, and taking his son in his arms, said—"Thou hast a heart, my child! thou hast a heart;* but God," said he, in a lower tone, to the Elchee, "has informed him he is soon to lose his father, and taught him where to look for a friend."

The anticipations of the minister proved just: though his fate was delayed for two years, chiefly from the influence of the king's mother, who well knew the value of such a servant as Hajee Ibrahim. Her death left the field open to his enemies, who fabricated every accusation that could work upon either the pride or fears of the king, to make him destroy one whom they at once dreaded and hated. Their arts were but too successful; and the high and disdainful manner in which this truly great man repelled the charges brought against him caused his being put to a cruel death. His brothers and sons were, according to the barbarous usage in Persia, included in his sentence. These,

* Dil dâree tifl, dil dâree.

though residing in different parts of the kingdom, were all seized (so well arranged was the plan) on the same day, and the same hour. Some were put to death, others lost their eyes; all their property was confiscated. Indeed the plunder of the accumulated wealth of the family who had so long enjoyed power probably tended, with other motives, in producing this melancholy termination to its fame and fortune.

It is stated, that though the king endeavours to persuade himself Hajee Ibrahim meant to rebel, and that his throne was endangered by the existence of this powerful subject, he is often visited with remorse at his own conduct towards him. On occasions of emergency to the state he has been frequently known to reproach his present ministers with the loss to Persia which their arts and jealousies had caused, exclaiming, "Where is Hajee Ibrahim? he alone was fit to give counsel to a monarch."

It may perhaps be received as a proof of the king's sentiments upon this subject, that, being aware of the affecting scene which had taken place with the youngest son of Hajee Ibrahim on the Elchee's leaving Teheran in 1800, he directed, on his second mission to Persia, that the sightless youth, who had enjoyed such favour as a child, might meet us on our advance, and receive, as he did in the notice and sympathy of his early friend, all the consolation which could be administered to one in his melancholy condition.

CHAPTER XIX.

Progress of the Russians—Buonaparte—Second Visit to Tullanca—King Abbas Meerzâ—Reflections—Electrifying Machine — Phantasmagoria—Ministers of the Persian Court—Mahomed Hoosein Khan Mervee.

TEN years had elapsed since my first visit to the court of Persia, and many changes had occurred, both in men and measures. The Russians, within this short period, had advanced their frontier from the north of the Caucasus to the banks of the Araxes, a space of above four hundred miles. Buonaparte had laid his plans for chaining the bear of Russia and the lion of Persia, with the design of harnessing them to the his war-chariot, that he might drive in triumph over the rich plains of India. His name was familiar to numbers in Persia, and some few understood the character of his power. Among these was my shrewd old friend Aga Mahomed Câsim-Wâlâ,* of Isfahan, who is at once a professor, a poet, a philosopher, and a very inquisitive politician. "This Buonaparte," said he to me one morning, when I paid him a visit in his apartment at the college, "is a wonderful man; he wields empires as if they were clubs. After he has settled with Turkey, he will, unless our king shapes his policy to his liking, give Persia a knock on the head with Russia,

* My old friend Câsim-Wâlâ died about five years after this interview. Among other occupations of his latter years was that of preparing for himself a place of interment in the Chehâr-Bâgh of Isfahan. He built a small but handsome mausoleum, with a tomb in the centre, for the top of which a fine marble slab was obtained from Yezd; and he not only wrote his own epitaph on this stone, but had it engraved, and every way finished, with the exception of the date of his death. Near the mausoleum he made a fountain and flower garden, with bowers and seats; and a gentleman who saw him a short time before he died, tells me this spot became his favourite resort, where he delighted to receive and converse with his friends and disciples.

and then make use of both to overthrow your power in India. Happen what will," said old Aga Mahomed, "he is a magnificent fellow, a perfect Faringee Chenghiz Khan."*

I am treading on forbidden ground; I have nothing to say to politics: if I had, this chapter might be more amusing. I could tell of French and English schemes for harlequin-changes, which were to leave my Persian friends no remains of barbarism but their beards! of Mahomedan princes trained to be reformers, of the sudden introduction of the fine arts, and of the roving tribes of Tartary and the wild mountaineers of Fars becoming, by the proper use of a few cabalistical phrases, disciplined regiments. These, and many similar transformations, were meant to prove that we lived in an age when any instructed or enlightened man might, if furnished with the necessary implements of pen, ink, and paper, effect any given change, on any given nation, in a few months.

This was not the first time that such experiments had been tried in Persia; for, besides a knowledge of the civil and military arts of Europe, efforts had been made to teach the Seffavean monarchs and their nobles to understand the laws, institutions, and governments of the more civilized world. The sarcastic and penetrating Gibbon, when speaking of the attempt, observes, "Chardin says that European travellers have diffused among the Persians some ideas of the freedom and mildness of our governments: they have done them a very ill office." This may be too severe; but if instruction is of a character to diminish happiness, without furthering improvement, he would be bold who should call it a blessing. A medicine may be excellent in itself, yet, from the peculiar habits and constitution of the patient, it may act as a poison. These and many similar sentences of wisdom I have now and then uttered, when talking about the proposed sudden regeneration of the Eastern world, but I never could obtain a hearing. My plans of slow and almost imperceptible change, which were not confined to the teaching half a dozen individuals, but embraced a whole people in their operation, have been ridiculed as proving nothing but the sluggishness of my understanding. When I have pleaded

* Faringee, as has been before remarked, implies European.

experience, I have been accused of giving that name to prejudice; my toleration of systems out of my power to alter, and interwoven with every feeling, habit, and enjoyment of the communities in which they prevail, has been referred to my narrow views; and all my pretensions to discernment and judgment have been called in question because I have persuaded myself, and tried to persuade others, that Asiatics, though they are not so fair as we are, though they are of a different religion, speak a different language, and have neither made the same advances in science nor in civilization, are, notwithstanding these disadvantages, not altogether destitute of good and great qualities, both of head and heart.

Liable as I am to such accusations, I must cautiously limit myself to facts, which I know from observation, or have heard from persons worthy of credit; but should my reader detect me in the sin of taking a more favourable view of human nature than its merits, I shall hope to be forgiven; while I pray that the stranger, who visits the land of my nativity, may come to it with a mind disposed rather to dwell on its green and fertile valleys, than upon its rugged rocks and bleak mountains. May he find enough of sound and good feeling among its inhabitants to make him look with indulgence on their failings and excesses. If he quarrels with that luxury and refinement, which, by supplying, multiply the wants of men; if he doubts the good of many of the laws and institutions which belong to an artificial society, the frame and workings of which the labour of a life would not enable him to comprehend, may he contemplate it in a spirit of humility, which rather leads him to question the correctness of his own judgment, than to pronounce, on a superficial glance, that every thing is wrong, which does not accord with his own habits and feelings.

When the second mission reached his court, the King of Persia was encamped at his summer-quarters of Sooltaneah, an extensive plain, whose elevation gives it a pleasant temperature during the hot season. The Elchee was welcomed, on his approach to the camp, by his old friend Noù Rôz Khan, whose personal appearance was unchanged by the ten years which had intervened since our last meeting. His manner, as usual, was cordial and frank; and he seemed particularly delighted to

inform the Elchee of the king's continued favour. "His majesty," said Nou Rôz Khan, "desires me to say that he will be delighted to see you, and bids me assure you, that if you have met with any obstacles or difficulties on this mission,* they have not been occasioned by him."

The ceremonies of our approach to court, and of our visit to the king, prince, and ministers, were exactly the same as on the first mission. The king was, if possible, more friendly and gracious. Among other proofs of personal favour, he insisted on bestowing a distinguished mark of his regard on the Elchee, and the order of the Lion and Sun (the arms of Persia) was created for that purpose.† The investiture of this order took place on our visit of leave. Dresses of honour were sent for the Elchee and his suite. When we came to the tent at the entrance into the king's pavilion, we were met by one of the chief ministers, and a fermân or royal mandate was read, conferring on the Elchee the title of Khan or Lord, with the rank of Sipâh-Silâr or General. This fermân was then placed in his hat, it being the custom for a Persian noble, on receiving any honorary title from his king, to wear the patent of creation in his cap when he goes to court to return thanks. After we were seated, his majesty congratulated the Elchee on his accession of rank. "When you came here first," he said, "you were a Captain; you are now a General in your own country; I have made you a Khan and Sipâh-Silâr in mine. At your next visit,

* This observation alluded to some embarrassments that had arisen in consequence of two British envoys, one from England, and the other India, meeting at the court of Persia.

† Nothing can be more curious than the fact of Mahomedan princes creating honours of knighthood to confer distinction on Christians. The usage commenced with the court of Constantinople, and was followed by that of Teheran. The King of Persia created the order of the Sun for General Gardanne, the ambassador from Buonaparte. This order was offered to Sir Harford Jones, envoy from the King of England, but was declined on account of the circumstances attending its origin. It was subsequently pressed upon the acceptance of the Elchee, but he deemed it proper to follow the example of the envoy of the King of England. The King of Persia determined, however, as he said, that his first European friend should wear an order of his creation, and instituted that of the Lion and Sun, which have been from very ancient times the arms of Persia.

which must be soon, I shall expect you to be a Fermân-Fermâee or Ruler: but approach nearer."

The Elchee rose, and went up to the throne, on which the king was seated; and his majesty, taking up a diamond-star, began to pin it on the Elchee's coat. It was evidently the first time the royal hands had been so employed. "The king" —a title by which he often speaks of himself—"the king," said he, "does not understand this kind of business;" and he laughed heartily at his own awkwardness. However, he would not allow any one to help him, and having at length accomplished the task, he again congratulated the Elchee, saying, "You are now confirmed in my service; I can show no higher favour than this. And that star on your breast will convince all the world of the regard in which the king holds you."

Nothing was wanting to render this farewell audience kind and gracious. His majesty, on our rising to take leave, expressed his hope of seeing the Elchee again, saying, "Every second has a third;"* and when we were fifty yards from the throne, and making our last bow, departing from all usage, he exclaimed in a loud voice, to the Elchee, "Once more may God preserve you." The courtiers looked amazed at this deviation from established form; and the prime minister told the Elchee he ought to value it far beyond all the honours conferred upon him.

Enough has been said of the king: it remains to speak of the heir-apparent. I one day accompanied the Elchee to a review of some regular infantry, to which Abbas Meerzâ had invited him, and at which his highness commanded in person, and put the troops through all their manœuvres. When this review was over, he requested to see the Elchee's escort, consisting of a select party of English dragoons, some native cavalry from India, and a brigade of horse-artillery. He expressed great admiration of the manner in which this small body went through their evolutions, and said, with such models he trusted soon to have a fine army. This hope the Elchee's answer did not encourage. On a subsequent visit to the prince the topic was renewed; and I was somewhat surprised to find the Elchee so

* The number three is deemed fortunate in Persia as elsewhere.

little of a courtier as to express the same sentiments to a prince, whose ears, it was evident, had long been soothed by far different language. Abbas Meerzâ listened with great patience, but his uneasy feelings were evident. "Why, from what you state," he observed, with much emotion, "I shall be an old man before I can make any progress with my present plans; and after all, they are likely to come to nothing." The Elchee said he was bound by his regard for his highness to speak the truth. "I am much obliged to you," answered the prince; "you think, I perceive, that the irregular horse of Persia are the best defence of our country; but they can never do what regular troops and cannon can." "But they can do much that regular troops and cannon cannot," replied the Elchee. "That is true," said the prince; and here ended the conversation. Neither party seemed convinced; Abbas Meerzâ continuing firm in his resolution to follow up his plans of improvement, and the Elchee appearing equally satisfied that these plans were nowise suited either to the present condition of Persia or the character of its people.

Abbas Meerzâ was, at this time, a young prince of engaging manners, handsome in person, and gifted with quickness and discernment. Owing to his intercourse with Europeans, he had thrown off many of those habits of state and ceremony which are so punctiliously observed by persons of high rank in Persia. He was now exercising his battalions, and he rode along the lines without an attendant. After the review, seeing the Elchee's curricle with a pair of fine Arab horses, he desired to have a drive. It was the first carriage of the kind he had ever been in, and he was quite delighted. As the horses trotted along the road to Teheran, he ordered his attendants to return. "Go," said he, laughing, "and tell my father I am on my way to his capital with the Elchee."

The curricle which had so delighted the prince was afterwards given to the king, who was equally pleased with it; and still more with the rapid movements and quick firing of two pieces of horse-artillery, which were presented to him. "These," he said, "will destroy all my enemies." The Elchee stated that what he had brought were only models, which the ingenuity of his majesty's subjects would soon copy; and suggested that it would be necessary to make roads for wheel carriages; and roads, he

added, if generally introduced, would be found alike useful for pleasure, for commerce, and for war.

The wisdom which prompted this advice was lauded to the skies. Roads were admitted to be a great and obvious improvement, at once ornamental and profitable to Persia. Plans for making and keeping them in repair were required and furnished. The royal mandate, the Elchee was told, should be issued immediately: and he was much pleased at the thought of having given rise to a measure so good, and which he considered as preparing the way for the permanent improvement of the country. But, aware of the difficulties likely to obstruct the plan, he begged the minister of finance, Ameen-ood-Douleh, to confine the first attempt to the communication between Sooltaneah, Teheran, and Tebreez; and advised that the results of this experiment should determine the further prosecution of the scheme.

The minister of finance, who was as remarkable for his plain manners as for his plain sense, acknowledged the justice of this suggestion. "But you know Persia," was his concluding significant remark; which sufficiently informed the Elchee that his project of road-making, however easy of execution, from the nature of the country and climate, would share the fate of other schemes, which it was then the fashion at the court of Persia to adopt, commence, and abandon. These highways required labour; which labour, political economists would have told the king, must be paid for by money, by provisions, or by the remission of other exactions. But this information would have been of little benefit, for I never knew a man, who, with all his good qualities, would listen with so little patience to political economists, as the king of kings, Fatteh Ali Shah; for that monarch, besides the habits and prejudices of his condition, has personally an insurmountable objection to all measures which include disbursement.

Time may do much with my Persian friends, but we must not expect to hurry that tardy-paced worker of miracles. We may inspire a few with that thirst for real glory, which desires to create, not to destroy; others may be instructed in science; but even in those whom we may elevate above their countrymen, early habits and national prejudices will still be too strong for us. Their speeches and their writings may exhibit enlightened

minds; but their actions will follow their established usages and ordinary habits; and their conduct will too often be what it was formerly. Like the lady-cat in the fable, they will be apt to spring from the board we have spread for them, whenever a mouse shows itself.

When the first mission was at Teheran, we found a chief there, called Ali Mahomed Khan, who had beeen compelled, by some political revolutions, to quit Cabool, and take refuge in Persia. He was a man of rank, and had been received and treated with hospitality and distinction by the king, who signified to the Elchee his wish, that he should take this nobleman to India, whither he was desirous of going. This request was the more readily complied with, as the Elchee had found Ali Mahomed a pleasant, and apparently a sensible man. I became very intimate with him; and when we arrived at Calcutta, I took great pleasure in showing him that splendid capital of the British dominions in the East. I pointed out the crowded shipping in its noble river; the elegant streets thronged with carriages; the newly-erected palace of its ruler; its college; the magnificent abodes of public officers and wealthy merchants; all, in short, that could impress him with an idea of the happy results of civilization.

Seeing my friend quite delighted with the contemplation of this rich scene, I asked him, with some exultation, what he thought of it? "A wonderful place to plunder!"* was his reply; and his eyes glistened as he made it, with anticipated enjoyment.

I mentioned this anecdote to my Christian friend, Khojah Arratoon, our treasurer. "Ay, ay," said the old man, "nature will come out. What you have related verifies our Armenian proverb: they were preaching the Gospel over the head of a wolf —'Stop!' said he; 'I see a flock of sheep passing.'"

I do not mean, in what I have here said, to condemn national efforts to spread knowledge, nor to deny that such endeavours may in due season produce happy effects; but such results will be retarded, not accelerated, by all attempts at rapid and premature changes. In endeavouring to effect these, we are often as absurd in our admiration of individuals, to whom a few of our

* "Ajeb jâhee berâee chappau!" literally, a wonderful place for a foray!

own favourite lights have been imparted, as in our condemnation of those whom we conceive to remain in their primitive darkness. We altogether forget that it is from the general condition of the country that the character of the population is chiefly formed. Hereditary and undisputed succession to the throne, though it may not diminish the frequency of foreign wars, nor prevent the shedding of human blood, gives an internal security, which leads to the introduction of a system that enables such a state to have efficient and permanent civil and military establishments; and it also gives, to a great proportion of its subjects, a valuable leisure to pursue science and literature, which gradually lead to further improvements in society. But in countries like Persia all government is personal; institutions and establishments rise and fall with the caprice of a sovereign; and supposing him steady in his objects, still the probability is, that they prosper and die with their founder; and while their basis is so unstable, and their duration so uncertain, they cannot be permanently efficient or useful.

Revolutions of such a nature as we desire will work themselves into form, when time changes men's sentiment, and ripens a nation for them; but we too often, in the foolish pride of our knowledge, rush towards the end, with little or no consideration about the means. In our precocious plans, we cast the blame from that on which it ought to rest, upon those we desire to reform. Because men continue, like their ancestors, to live under an arbitrary monarch, and have not the precise qualities upon which we value ourselves, we hasten to the conclusion that they are slaves and barbarians, whom the force of habit and prejudice alone saves from being as miserable as they are degraded. Viewing them in this light, we waste a pity upon them which they neither value nor understand; nor has it, if we analyze its grounds, any just foundation. Though unacquainted with political freedom, though superficial in science, and unlearned in Greek or Latin, they are not without defences against injustice or despotism; and the very condition of their society gives them, on all points affecting themselves, their families, or friends, an intuitive quickness and clearness of perception, which appears wonderful to men rendered dull, as it were, by civilization. Neither are such nations deficient in those arts, which are

subservient to the subsistence, and promote the enjoyments of man; and they are perhaps more alive than we improved beings to those passions whence so much of our happiness and misery flow.

I have travelled much, but have found little difference in the aggregate of human felicity. My pride and patriotism have often been flattered by the complaints and comparisons of the discontented; but I have never met any considerable number of a tribe or nation, who would have exchanged their condition for that of any other people upon the earth. When I have succeeded, as I often did, in raising admiration and envy, by dwelling upon the advantages of the British government, I have invariably found that these feelings vanished, when I explained more specifically the sacrifices of personal liberty, the restraints of the law, and the burden of taxation, by which these advantages are purchased. It was the old story of the Arab nurse, who could not endure England because there were no date trees; and the King of Persia, who, though feeling all the insecurity of his own crown, could not for a moment tolerate the thoughts of wearing that of England, which would have reduced him to only one wife!

Such observations should have made me humble; but they did not. I continued to value myself on my superiority; and when in Persia, was as eager as any of our party to parade my knowledge, particularly in science (which, by-the-bye, was my weak point), and to enjoy the wonder which its display produced.

One of the chief means of astonishing our Persian friends, on the first mission, was an electrifying machine, with the effects of which we surprised and alarmed all, from majesty itself to the lowest peasant.

When it was exhibiting at Shiraz, for the gratification of Cherâgh Ali Khan, who had come to pay the Elchee a visit, this formal minister expressed himself satisfied with the sparks he saw elicited, and the slight shocks which were given to others. He declined receiving one himself, though he expressed a conviction that he was above being startled, like those upon whom he had seen the experiment tried. This great man, having very condescendingly taken a walk into the garden to give his attendants an opportunity of seeing the effects of the wonderful machine,

returned while they were encircling the operator (our doctor) and holding each other's hands in expectation of the shock. It is, in Persia, deemed very indecorous for any one to have his back turned when a man of rank enters the apartment; but for domestics to behave in this manner is an almost inexpiable offence. The good people of whom I speak were, however, in too breathless a state of expectation to observe the approach of their lord, who, enraged by this apparent rudeness, seized, with a most indignant air, the shoulder of one of them, to take him to task. At this moment, whether by accident or design has never yet been discovered, the shock was given. Each quitted the hold of his neighbour, and started back; while Cherâgh Ali Khan, who felt it the more from its being unexpected, staggered against the wall, and looked the very picture of terror.

The Elchee, who had entered the room with him, could not repress his mirth. This was the signal for all; and even the lowest of the domestics went away tittering at what had befallen their magnificent master, who, after a short pause, during which dignity had a struggle with good sense, allowed the latter to gain the victory, and laughed like others at what had occurred.

At Isfahan all were delighted with the electric machine, except one renowned doctor and lecturer of the college, who, envious of the popularity gained by this display of our superior science, contended publicly, that the effects produced were moral, not physical—that it was the mummery we practised, and the state of nervous agitation we excited, which produced an ideal shock: but he expressed his conviction, that a man of true firmness of mind would stand unmoved by all we could produce out of our glass bottle, as he scoffingly termed our machine. He was invited to the experiment, and declared his readiness to attend at the next visit the Begler-Beg paid the Elchee.

The day appointed soon arrived. The Begler-Beg came with a numerous retinue, and amongst others the doctor, whom we used to call "Red Stockings," from his usually wearing scarlet hose. He was, we found, notwithstanding his learning and reputed science, often made an object of mirth in the circles of the great and wealthy at Isfahan, to whom he furnished constant matter of amusement, from the pertinacity with which he maintained his dogmas. He had nearly, we were told, lost his life

the year before, by marching up to a large buck-antelope, which was known to be vicious, but which, according to the theory of the philosopher, was to be overawed by the erect dignity of man, provided he was fearlessly approached. The consequence of this experiment was different from what the theorist expected. The wild animal very unceremoniously butted the doctor into a deep dry ditch in the field where he was grazing, and the learned man was confined to his bed nearly three months, during which, he had ample time to consider the causes of this unlooked-for event.

Though the above and similar instances might afford reason for concluding, that Red Stockings, with all his philosophy, was not overwise, I discovered that he maintained his ground in the first society, by means common in Persia as in other countries. He was, in fact, "a little of the fool,* and not too much of the honest." This impression of his character, combined with his presumption, made us less scrupulous in our preparations to render him an example for all who might hereafter doubt the effects of our boasted electricity; and indeed our Persian visitors seemed anxious that the effect should be such as to satisfy the man who had dared us to the trial, that it was physical, not moral.

The philosopher, notwithstanding various warnings, came boldly up, took hold of the chain with both hands, planted his feet firmly, shut his teeth, and evidently called forth all his resolution to resist the shock. It was given; and poor Red Stockings dropt on the floor as if he had been shot. There was a momentary alarm: but on his almost instant recovery, and the Elchee explaining that the effect had been increased by the determination to resist it, all gave way to one burst of laughter. The good-natured philosopher took no offence. He muttered something about the re-action of the feelings after being overstrained, but admitted there was more in the glass-bottle than he had anticipated.

As the Persians had become acquainted with electrical machines, by their increased intercourse with Europeans, the Elchee, when on his second mission, did not choose again to trust to one of them for the entertainment of his friends. He purchased, therefore, for this purpose, a large and excellent phantasmagoria,

* "*Poco di matto*," is deemed by the Italians an essential quality in a great man's companion.

which was furnished with numerous glasses; on these were painted spectres, with shapes monstrous beyond what the poet's fancy ever bodied forth.

With our phantasmagoria, old and young, rich and poor, were in raptures. The prince at Shiraz was the first person of royal blood to whom it was exhibited, and he declared his wonder and delight at this extraordinary invention. Persons were instructed to exhibit it to his ladies, who, we learned, were enchanted with its effects; and his mother,* an able princess, who had long exercised supreme authority over him and the province of Fars, declaring herself gratified beyond measure at the wonders she had seen.

What rendered the phantasmagoria more attractive, was the ingenuity and talent of a young man from India,† who had charge of it. Besides being an adept in exhibiting it, he made frames, and painted, as occasion required, the glass he placed in them, with all kinds of Persian figures; and part of the story told in the day was sometimes exhibited at the Elchee's evening entertainments, which were often attended by dignified persons, who had before withheld their presence from regard to punctilious ceremony, but could not resist their curiosity. Thus our phantasmagoria became an important implement of diplomacy.

The Prince of Persia was anxious to possess this treasure, but as its fame had preceded the mission, it was not judged politic to disappoint the excited expectations of majesty; our magical box therefore accompanied us, and produced equal effects at the great court asembled at Sooltaneah, as it had at that of Shiraz.

The Elchee took particular pleasure, in the astonishment produced by his phantasmagoria. I one day suggested that wise and grave men, filling high stations, might expose themselves to ridicule from being amused by such trifles, and employing them as means of amusing and gratifying others. His quick reply was, "The man who is always wise, is a fool! and he, above all others, is most foolish, who, entrenched in forms and observances, neglects to use every honest means with which human nature supplies him, to promote fair and honourable objects. Besides,"

* This remarkable lady, who for a long period might be said to govern Fars, died three years ago of the cholera.

† Mr. Sundt, an Anglo-Indian.

he added, "this amuses me, as much as any grown-up child in Persia, and it is from my keen-sighted guests observing that my enjoyment is real, that they are so much delighted. Were I to parade my superiority, by denying myself this, and other gratifications, which may be deemed trifling by men of measured manners, they would also be reserved and dignified, and we should become a group of those formalists, whom our great philosopher* has described, as always using shifts and perspectives, to make superficies seem body that hath depth and bulk."

After this answer, in which those that know him as well as I do will discover that the Elchee had succeeded in persuading himself, that his natural love of amusement was a valuable diplomatic quality; I, as a true follower of a mission, found it necessary to acquiesce in his reasoning, and must, therefore, recommend phantasmagorias, or something similar, as of essential importance to the success of all future embassies to Persia!

I found, on this second mission, that the duties of Hajee Ibrahim had, at his death, been divided amongst several ministers. My old friend, Hajee Mahomed Hoosein, who had been so kind to us on the first mission, when he was Begler-Beg of Isfahan, was now, under the title of Ameen-ood-Douleh,† at the head of the finance and revenue department. He had risen from a low origin, that of a small shopkeeper in Isfahan. The Persians, who delight in the wonderful, spoke of his riches as immense, and they referred the origin of that wealth (which enabled him to preserve the favour of the king, by satisfying his cupidity) to his having obtained part of the royal treasure, which was lost at Isfahan by Jaffier Khan Zend, when he fled, in the year 1785, in such confusion from that city, that not only his baggage and treasures, but the ensigns of royalty, were plundered by its inhabitants.

This account may have some foundation, but inquiry and observation satisfied me, that the wealth of this sensible minister arises out of those more honourable sources which his industry and good management have created. Suffice it, as a proof of this fact, to state, that every province under him is prosperous;

* Bacon.

† This title means, the security of the state.

and the city of Isfahan has more than doubled its inhabitants, and quadrupled its manufacture of rich silk and brocade, during the twenty years that he has been its governor.

Hajee Mahomed Hoosein* is a man of great simplicity of manners, and neither has, nor pretends to, any of that wit, or brilliancy in conversation, for which many of the Persians are so distinguished. He is rather dull in company, and appears what he really is, a plain man of business. A friend of mine one day breakfasting with him, was surprised to hear him say to a poor man, who brought a pair of slippers to sell, "Sit down my honest friend, and take your breakfast; we will bargain about the slippers afterwards."

This admission of inferiors to their society at meals is not, however, uncommon with men of rank in Persia. It arises out of a sense of the sacred duties of hospitality, and out of parade, if they have not the reality of that humility so strongly inculcated in the Koran. Besides, their character and condition often disposes them to relax with those beneath them, and even with menial servants, whom they admit to a familiarity which at first view appears contradictory to those impressions we have of their haughty character. I was one day almost reproached by Aga Meer, on account of the difference which he observed in our behaviour to those of our countrymen, who were below us in condition. "You speak of your consideration for inferiors," said he to me, "but you keep them at a much greater distance than we do. Is this your boasted freedom?" I told him that it was exactly our boasted freedom, which compelled us to the conduct we observed. "You are so classified in Persia," said I, "that you can descend from your condition as you like; a man below you will never presume on your familiarity so far as to think himself, for a moment, on the same level with those, who are so entirely distinct from his class in the community. In England we are all equal in the eye of the law, the rights of every man are the same; the differences which exist are merely those of fortune, which place us in the relation of master and servant; but where there is no other distinction, we are obliged to preserve that with care, or all forms and respects would soon be lost."

* This minister died three years ago.

The good Meerzâ admitted that there might be some truth in what I stated. "But yours is a strange country," he said; "I shall never quite understand its ways and usages."

Meerzâ Sheffee,* who styles himself Premier, may be called the minister of the court; he is a veteran in all its arts, intrigues, and corruptions. Good-humoured, quick, and flexible, he has managed to steer his crooked course through a long life, and still retains his head and his eyes, though both have, no doubt, been often in danger. The king is attached to him, as an old servant of the family.

Riza Koolee is also an old servant of the Kajir princes. He is a man of talent; his manners are peculiarly pleasing, and he is one of the most eloquent persons I have heard in Persia. I had not the same opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with this minister, as with others; but, if common report is to be believed, he has few superiors in good sense or good feeling. He has evinced none of that precocious ambition which is so common with his countrymen. He is reputed to be a modest as well as a deserving man, and the favour and fortune he has attained have not been acquired by means which could make him enemies. By not pressing into the front rank, he has long combined safety with advancement.†

These are the principal ministers of the king; but Meerzâ Boozoorg, who has long presided, under the title of Kâim Mekâm, over the councils of the heir-apparent, may be said to have much more influence than any of them in the political department. He has greater experience, and understands the foreign interests of his country, better than any other minister; and joins to an equal temper, a thorough knowledge of the nature of his own situation, and the characters of those it is his duty to serve and obey. He amused me one day, by telling me the rule by which he had hitherto escaped, and trusted he should continue to escape, the common fate of Persian ministers. "I never," said he, "accumulate money or property; I have a small inheritance in land, which has been in my family for centuries; this cannot, in

* This minister is dead since the journal was written from which this is taken.

† Since this journal was written he fell into disgrace and died, after being some time minister to the Prince Regent of Fars.

accordance with usage, be confiscated: and as to every thing else, I spend it as I get it. This principle is known; and the king," he added, "often laughs, and says, 'I should not gain one piastre by the death and plunder of that extravagant fellow, Meerzâ Boozoorg.'"*

I must not forget in this place to mention Meerzâ Abd-ool-Wahhâb, who has long been, and still continues, the Moonshee-ool-Memâlik, or chief letter-writer of the state; and well he merits his eminence. I recognised his talent for the sublime, from the difficulty I had in discovering his meaning, amidst the clouds of tropes and metaphors with which it is always enveloped. That, however, is the taste of his country; and the man must have merit, who stands acknowledged to be the first in an art, in which all Persians of liberal education strive to excel. His character, in other respects, is that of a very sensible and respectable man; though an old Moollâh, a friend of mind, shook his head when I praised him, and whispered, "All you say may be true, but he is an inveterate Soofee."

Among the acquaintances I formed at this second visit, there was none that interested me in any degree so much as Mahomed Hoosein Khan of Merv, from whom I heard a short but affecting account of the vicissitudes of his eventful life. The facts he narrated exhibit so much of Asiatic character in its best and worst lights, that they must be acceptable to the reader. Of their correctness there can be no doubt, being alike confirmed by the internal evidence of their truth, the corroborating statements of contemporaries, and the high character of the narrator of his own extraordinary adventures.

The city of Merv,† during the reign of the Seffavean monarchs, was considered the most important frontier post of Persia; and in the reign of Tâmâsp the second, its defence was intrusted to the valour of a branch of the tribe of Kajir. As the strength of the nation decayed, the chiefs of this tribe were left, almost unsupported, to resist the attacks of the Tartar tribes on the Oxus, who made annual inroads upon them. They received for some years casual aid from the Afghâns of Cabool; but that

* This old and able minister died lately of the cholera.

† Merv is the ancient Antiochia Margiana. It was founded by Alexander and became the capital of one of his successors, Antiochus Nicator.

government also fell into confusion; and Byrâm Ali Khan, the father of Mahomed Hoosein, had for several years to contend against that extraordinary bigot, Beggee Jân,* who had, by an union of fanaticism and wisdom, consolidated the divided tribes of this part of Tartary into one government, of which Bokhara was the capital.

The actions of Byrâm Ali, though given on the most authentic records, appear more like a romance than a history. Suffice it here to say, he closed, on the banks of the Oxus, a life marked by the most gallant achievements, leaving his son the city and walls of Merv (for all its fields were desolate), and the name and example of a father almost worshipped by his soldiers, and as much praised when dead, as dreaded while living, by the enemies of his country.

Mahomed Hoosein Khan, though quite a youth, defended what remained of his inheritance with an unsubdued spirit; which obtained from every one an acknowledgment, that the son was worthy of his renowned sire. But all his struggles were unavailing, against the overwhelming numbers of the Oosbegs, who at last reduced the city to such a state of famine and distress, that its inhabitants insisted upon their chief surrendering to a power which it was hopeless any longer to oppose. He was carried with all his family to Bokhara. I shall give the remainder of his story in his own words, as nearly as they can be recollected from his plain but minute relation.

"Beggee Jân was anxious I should adopt his creed, that of a Soofee, and abandon what he deemed the errors of the Sheäh faith. Circumstances compelled me so far to conform, that he expected my conversion, and for some time treated me and my family with respect, and even kindness.

"During a period of some years, having no other employment, I applied myself to literature, and read all the histories I could find. I should have continued to spend a contented, if not a happy life, in such pursuits, had this tranquillity not been interrupted by the flight of my nephew, Bâkir Khan, to the king of Persia. I was considered as the contriver of his escape,

* For an account of this remarkable ruler, see History of Persia, vol. ii. p. 243.

and from that moment was looked upon as an enemy of Beggee Jân.

"Being aware of the suspicions he entertained, I one day addressed him in open court. I reminded him of his having sworn to treat me and mine with kindness, and of the peculiar obligations which an oath should impose upon a man of his sanctity. I bade him dismiss his suspicions, and act as he had hitherto done; or confirm them by an examination of facts, and to treat me as a criminal if he found that I had in any way acted contrary to my word, or to that honour which belonged to me as the chief of a tribe, and a native of Merv, whose inhabitants had ever been celebrated for strict regard to their pledged faith.

"Seeing the manly openness of this address had an effect upon his nobles and attendants, the old hypocrite arose from his seat, came forward, and kissed my forehead, while he thanked me for speaking to him as I had done, and promised to dismiss from his mind every suspicion regarding me. He was, however, most insincere, and had no wish but to destroy me.

"It would be tiresome," said Mahomed Hoosein, "to repeat all the artifices Beggee Jân used, to enable him to effect this object without loss of character. Finding, however, that I was on my guard, and that I pursued a line of conduct which gave him no hopes of entangling me in his toils, he determined to seize and put me to death. It was long before I could bring myself to think that a person of his wary character would have recourse to unjustifiable violence; nor was it until his guards had surrounded my house, and were bursting open the gates, that I could believe he would proceed to such extremities. My followers, when this occurred, entreated leave to resist the attack. 'Let us at least die in warm blood,' they said. I forbade them to stir, adding, that it was perhaps only my life he sought, and my family and friends might be spared. At this moment the voice of Beggee Jân was heard, exclaiming, 'Bring me the head of Mahomed Hoosein Khan.' Satisfied of his object, I gave way to the earnest entreaties of all around me, and fled through a small back gate of the house, accompanied only by my nephew, Ibrahim Beg. I took this step, not so much from the hope of saving my own life, as that my escape would prevent further outrage to my family. It had the desired effect; for on its being

stated that I was gone, and a strict search confirming the assertion, the troops were withdrawn, and sent with others in pursuit of one against whom their sovereign had now become perfectly furious.

"The detail of my journeys and sufferings, from the hour of my escape, till I found refuge in Persia, would fill volumes. I shall make it as short as possible; for though I dwell on some parts of the scene with pleasing recollections, there are others which I cannot think of without horror. However, God's will be done; let his glorious name be praised for all he does; it is not for blind mortals to complain." After these pious ejaculations the Khan proceeded with his narration.

"I had only three friends in the town on whom I could depend. I proceeded to the door of one, but he was asleep, and I durst not make the noise necessary to awake him. When I came to the house of the second, I learnt that Beggee Jân had sent for him: and the third, I was informed by his domestics, having heard of my situation, had hastened to the scene, in the expectation of contributing to my escape.

"Hopeless and wearied, I wandered all that night about the streets of Bokhara, and a hundred times heard it proclaimed that ten thousand pieces of gold should be the reward of him who brought me to Beggee Jân.

"It was towards morning when I went out of the gate of the city, accompanied only by my nephew. We concealed ourselves in a corn field till the evening, and then, though worn out with hunger, anxiety, and fatigue, we took the road leading to Sheher-Sebz.* I was bare-footed, and unaccustomed to walk; but my situation gave me a power of exertion beyond what I could have believed; and after a most distressing and dangerous journey we arrived at that city, the ruler of which, Niyâz Ali, moved by the account of my sufferings, treated me with kindness and distinction.

"I remained six months at Shèher-Sebz, with a heart painfully anxious for my family; but knowing that I was pursued by the rancorous hatred of Beggee Jân, and being satisfied that though

* Sheher-Sebz means the Verdant City, a name given by Timoor to the ancient city of Kesh, which was the place of his birth. It lies about 130 miles direct east of Bokhara.

Niyâz Alî had not the means to defend me, he would never be so base as to give me up, I chose to relieve him from the embarrassment my presence created. When I intimated my intention to leave him, he expressed much regret, as he feared that my powerful enemy might succeed in seizing me. He suggested, as the best chance of escape, that I should go to Narbotta Beg, the Prince of Ourat Teppah, which I accordingly did.

"Soon after my departure, Beggee Jân attacked Sheher-Sebz, and demanded that I should be given up; but the generous Niyâz Ali concealed my having left him, till he heard of my safe arrival at Ourat Teppah, when he announced my flight, and the attack of his city was abandoned.

"After remaining some months at Ourat Teppah, I desired to leave it, but the prince would not consent, until he heard that my enemy was secretly employing agents to murder his guest. His knowledge of the devotion of the Oosbegs to their sovereign made him have the most serious fears for my life and his own honour, if I continued within reach of these assassins. To save both, he had recourse to an extraordinary expedient.

"He took my nephew and me with him on one of his hunting parties, and privately asked me in what direction I wished to proceed. I told him I desired to visit the court of Zemân Shâh. He immediately (without informing any one) placed us in two large trunks, which were put on camels and sent away as merchandise on the road towards Thibet.*

"After we were beyond the reach of Beggee Jân we visited many towns in Tartary; but on our arrival at Thibet, I learnt that Ạbdûlla Khan, governor of Cashmere, had rebelled, and the country was consequently in a state of confusion. I was therefore compelled to take the road of Bedekshan, and the mountains of Siyâh Posh.† dressed as a Fakeer; and under this disguise I arrived safe at Cabool, after having encountered a thousand distresses and dangers.

"When I arrived at this city I did not deem it prudent to reveal myself. Zemân Shâh and his vizier were gone to Herat, and Fatteh Ali Shah, king of Persia, was at Meshed. I con-

* Hajee Mahomed Hoosein Khan has written an account of this extraordinary journey, and of the countries he passed through.

† For an account of this remarkable people, see Elphinstone's Cabool.

tinued a poor wandering mendicant for some time in Cabool. I often saw noblemen of high rank, with whom I was well acquainted, without their having the slightest recollection of their former friend. At this period I had almost died from want of food; and my distresses were increased by my nephew being afflicted with worms in his feet, which disabled him from walking. I had to support him along from place to place, when I was myself sinking with hunger and fatigue. I one day went to the house of an old friend to ask relief, but he was not at home. His servants directed me to the câravânserâi of Aga Mahomed of Koom. I went thither, and stopped near the room in which was lodged Hajee Hoosein Abeer, a merchant whom I had formerly employed and favoured. I stayed there some time, till, mistaking me for a beggar, he bade me go away, saying he had nothing to give me. I thought he recognized, but would not acknowledge me in my distress, and I went away with a heavy but proud heart from the door of a man whom, I immediately afterwards found, was at the very time disbursing large sums on agents, whom he had sent in different directions to ascertain my fate, in order to contribute to my relief.

"Having seated myself at some distance from the câravânserâi, a native of Meshed passed, who had long been in my service. He no sooner cast his eyes upon me, than he recognized his old master in spite of my disguise, and threw himself at my feet. The moment he arose, he hastened to the room of Hajee Hoosein Abeer, who instantly returned with him; and after thanking God for this accidental discovery of one to whom he owed such benefits, he begged me to accompany him to his apartment. From that moment my sufferings were at an end. I was provided with clothes, horses, and every thing that I required, and proceeded towards Candahar in the character of a merchant; having strictly enjoined those who knew me, not to disclose my name or rank.

"I thought at first of waiting at Candahar till Zemân Shâh reached that city, and of trying what could be effected through his aid. I heard, however, that he had proceeded from Herat to Cabool, by the upper road, through the country of the Hazarrah.

"As I observed, from the way in which affairs were conducted

that the government of this prince had no stability, I resolved on proceeding to the court of Teheran; but not wishing to give the court of Cabool any just ground of offence, I wrote to the vizier Wefâ-dâr Khan, and gave him a particular account of all that had befallen me from the time of my escape from Bokhara till that moment. Zemân Shâh commanded his minister to desire me to stay at Candahar until his arrival. But I learnt the disposition of the court by the first two words of the vizier's answer: these were, "Hookm-e-alee," or (it is) the high command; a style of address suited only to an inferior. The instant I read this expression I determined to leave a country where my reduced condition made men presume to treat me with such arrogance.

"When preparing to quit Candahar, the road was shut by the advance of the prince Mahmood, who took the city, and I was plundered of all I had brought from Cabool, as were also the merchants with whom I associated. I remained at that city a short time after this event; but seeing nothing in the character of Mahmood that gave me confidence, I did not discover myself to him, but set out as soon as I could with some merchants, and, travelling through Seestan, arrived at the fort of Khyn in Khorassan, where I was kindly and hospitably treated by its chief, who was an old friend of my family. He appointed a mehmandar to see me safe to Teheran, and sent an express to announce my arrival to the king of Persia, who instantly invited me to his court.

"Before I arrived at Teheran, I learnt that the cruel tyrant of Bokhara, enraged at my escape, had first imprisoned my family in wells,* and afterwards put every one of them to death,† upbraiding them with my having taken refuge in Persia, a country towards which he ever entertained a spirit of the most inveterate hostility.

* Imprisonment in dry wells is very common in some parts of Tartary.

† Thirty-eight persons were put to death, of whom eleven were sons, brothers, and nephews.

Such of the women of his family as were not killed were given away to persons of inferior condition; a brutal and degrading usage practised in Persia, as well as Tartary, in cases where it is desired to disgrace as well as punish men of high rank.

"I proceeded," said the Khan, hardly able to conclude his narration, "with a broken heart, to the capital of Persia, where the noble and generous conduct of this king affords me all the consolation I can receive in this world, in which I am, though apparently surrounded with every luxury and every honour, a wretched and desolate man."

The forlorn and fugitive chief of Merv was received at the court of Persia with every mark of regard and honour to which he would have been entitled as lord of that once famous city and in the full zenith of his power. The king went into mourning for his family, and every Omrah of the Kajir tribe was ordered to pay him a visit of condolence; and even Abbas Meerzâ was desired by his father to wait upon and console the afflicted stranger and guest.

On the death of Hajee Ibrahim, the king is said to have desired to raise Mahomed Hoosein Khan to the rank of prime minister, but he declined the dangerous dignity, declaring he had made a vow never again to enter upon affairs of state, unless an opportunity was afforded him of wreaking his vengeance on the merciless ruler of Bokhara, by sacking that capital.

Mahomed Hoosein Khan continues his habits of study, which, added to the information he has acquired in his travels, renders his conversation at once agreeable and instructive. His conduct, since he came into Persia, has obtained him great respect from all classes. There are some few who accuse him of intriguing, and assert, that notwithstanding his professed vow, he secretly mixes in matters of state: but such suspicions and accusations are probably the consequence of his continuing to enjoy so great a share of the royal favour. His ostensible station is that of the Nedeem, or chosen companion of the sovereign, and as such he is almost in constant attendance upon the king's person, whose whole conduct towards this unfortunate chief does equal honour to his head and heart.*

* Mahomed Hoosein Khan of Merv has finished his earthly career since this was written.

CHAPTER XX.

Departure from Sooltaneah—Tebreez—Climate—Lake of Oormeah—Ahmed the Cobbler.

THOUGH delighted to turn towards home, the joy at our departure from the royal camp was not unmingled with regret, at taking leave, probably for the last time, of many of our Persian friends. The king's attention to the Elchee had been most flattering, and we had all participated in the royal favour. Fatteh Ali Shah had, indeed, with all due allowances for other motives, evinced on this occasion sentiments and feelings which did him honour as a man as well as a sovereign.

We went from Sooltaneah to Tebreez, which has for many years been the residence of the heir-apparent, Abbas Meerzâ. Tebreez is celebrated as one of the most healthy cities in Persia, and it is on this ground alone that we can account for its being so often rebuilt, after its repeated demolition by earthquakes. It is seldom free, even for a twelvemonth, from slight shocks; and it is little more than thirty years since it was levelled with the ground, by one of these terrible convulsions of nature.

I was more surprised at the salubrity of this town, from knowing the great extremes of heat and cold to which it is subject, having obtained from a friend who had resided there during the whole of the preceding year, a most accurate diary of the various changes of its climate. From this it appeared, that on the twentieth of October there was a heavy fall of snow, which did not however remain long upon the ground; the weather again became mild, and there was no excessive cold until the middle of December, from which period till the end of January Fahrenheit's thermometer, when exposed to the air at night, never rose above zero, and in the house, at mid-day, it was seldom above 18°.

January was by far the coldest month; during it, the water is described as becoming almost instantaneously solid in the tumblers upon the dining table, and the ink often freezing in the inkstand, although the table was quite close to the fire. For at least a fortnight not an egg was to be had, all being split by the cold. Some bottles of wine froze, although covered with straw, and many of the copper ewers were split by the expansion of the water when frozen in them.

According to this diary, the weather became comparatively mild towards the end of February; but it appears that here, as in England, a

"Lingering winter chills the lap of May;"

for on the first of that month there was a heavy fall of snow, with such cold, that all the promise of the spring was destroyed. Of the heat that ensued, and the sudden and great changes to which Tebreez is subject, we had abundant proof; in the month of June, the range of the thermometer being usually, within the twenty-four hours, from 56° to 94°, a difference of 38°.

The extreme heat of summer causes most of the houses in Tebreez to be built so as to admit the air during that season; but the architects of Persia fall far short of their brethren in Europe, in forming plans by which the cool air can be admitted in summer and excluded in winter. This partly accounts for the effects of the cold to which I have alluded; but the city of Tebreez, and many other parts of Aderbejan, and still more of the neighbouring province of Kûrdistan, though nowhere beyond the fortieth degree of latitude, are, from their great elevation, subject to extreme cold. In the latter country I found, on the morning of the seventeenth of August, ice half an inch thick on a basin of water standing in my tent.

During the few days we remained at Tebreez I was in continual attendance upon the Elchee, who was engaged in inspecting the state and equipment of the newly-formed regular troops of Persia. The day before our departure he had had a long interview with Abbas Meerzâ, who appeared to expect that what he had seen of his military improvements would alter his sentiments as to the policy of the change. This, however, was not the case; the arguments before urged were repeated: and, though

every credit was given to the young and ardent prince for the surprising progress he had made, the Elchee still contended that it must be dangerous for a country to make its armies more tangible to an enemy, until certain of being his equal in the field of battle.

In the course of their conversation upon this subject, the Elchee related to the prince what the late minister, Hajee Ibrahim,* had told him, of the sentiments and designs of that able monarch, Aga Mahomed Khan, when a large army of Russians, under Valerian Zuboff, crossed the Araxes, and encamped on the plain of Mogam, in the month of November, 1796.

Notwithstanding the severity of the season, Aga Mahomed Khan made every preparation to resist the threatened invasion. He assembled the leaders of his army, and told them that the Russians had presumed, during his absence in Khorassan, to invade the opposite frontier of his dominions. "But my valiant warriors," he added, "shall be led against them, and we will, by the blessing of God, charge their celebrated lines of infantry and batteries of cannon, and cut them to pieces with our conquering swords." The chiefs applauded the heroic resolution of their sovereign, and promised to support him with their lives. When they were gone, the monarch directed Hajee Ibrahim to approach, and asked him if he had heard what he said to the military commanders. The minister said he had. "And do you think," said he, "I will do what I have told them?" "Undoubtedly, if it is your majesty's pleasure," was the reply. "Hajee," said Aga Mahomed Khan, half angry, "have I been mistaken? are you also a fool? Can a man of your wisdom believe I will ever run my head against their walls of steel, and expose my irregular army to be destroyed by their cannon and disciplined troops? I know better. Their shot shall never reach me; but they shall possess no country beyond its range. They shall not know sleep; and, let them march where they choose, I will surround them with a desert."

From Tebreez, our first march of fifteen miles was to

* This occurrence was told the Elchee by Hajee Ibrahim in 1800, scarcely four years after the event to which it referred. Vide Hist. Persia, vol. ii. p. 297.

Khoosroo-Shâh, a village situated in a beautiful valley, where we remained for a day, admiring the scenery, and enjoying the cool shade of the surrounding groves and gardens. In one of the latter our mehmandar gave us a sumptuous breakfast.

Our second day's journey brought us in sight of the lake of Oormeah, which is of considerable extent. We examined a marble quarry near its shore, which had not been worked since the time of Nadir Shâh. The Persians wished us to believe that the peculiar quality of the water of the lake, by mixing with the soil, formed the marble, which they declared was soft when first cut, but became hard from exposure to the sun. One of our party, who was a geologist, endeavoured to prove to them that this belief was quite erroneous, by explaining the nature of the strata of this quarry, as well as the composition of the marble; but his knowledge was evidently most unpopular with the audience he had gathered round him, and they continued as completely satisfied as they had been before his scientific demonstrations, that the marble was formed in the manner related by their fathers.

The lake of Oormeah is computed to be three hundred miles in circumference. It is very clear, but salt, and has a sulphureous smell. We were assured that no fish or any living creature is to be found in this great expanse of water, which one of the learned men of our mission informed me was the Spauto of Strabo, and the Marcianus of Ptolemy.

From our encampment near the shore of this famous lake to the city of Mârâgâ is eighteen miles: we made this march at night. Moollâh Adeenah, the story-teller of his majesty, was one of our party. The Elchee asked him to beguile the weariness of our road with a tale. "How many fersekhs long do you wish it?" was his reply. "At least five," was the answer. "I can exactly suit you," said the Moollâh; "you shall have Ahmed the cobbler." I could not help laughing at this mode of measuring a tale; but I was assured it was a common custom, arising out of the calculation professed story-tellers were compelled to make of the leisure of their hearers. All further remarks upon this usage were put an end to, by Moollâh Adeenah desiring us to be silent and attentive: his wish being complied with, he commenced as follows:

"In the great city of Isfahan lived Ahmed the cobbler, an honest and industrious man, whose wish was to pass through life quietly; and he might have done so, had he not married a handsome wife, who, although she had condescended to accept of him as a husband, was far from being contented with his humble sphere of life.

"Sittâra, such was the name of Ahmed's wife, was ever forming foolish schemes of riches and grandeur: and though Ahmed never encouraged them, he was too fond a husband to quarrel with what gave her pleasure: an incredulous smile or a shake of the head, was his only answer to her often-told day-dreams; and she continued to persuade herself, that she was certainly destined to great fortune.

"It happened one evening, while in this temper of mind, that she went to the Hemmâm, where she saw a lady retiring dressed in a magnificent robe, covered with jewels, and surrounded by slaves. This was the very condition Sittâra had always longed for, and she eagerly inquired the name of the happy person, who had so many attendants and such fine jewels. She learned it was the wife of the chief astrologer to the king. With this information she returned home. Her husband met her at the door, but was received with a frown; nor could all his caresses obtain a smile or a word; for several hours she continued silent, and in apparent misery; at length she said:

"'Cease your caresses; unless you are ready to give me a proof that you do really and sincerely love me.'

"'What proof of love,' exclaimed poor Ahmed, 'can you desire, which I will not give?'

"'Give over cobbling; it is a vile, low trade, and never yields more than ten or twelve dinars a day. Turn astrologer! your fortune will be made, and I shall have all I wish, and be happy.'

"'Astrologer!' cried Ahmed, 'astrologer! Have you forgotten who I am—a cobbler, without any learning—that you want me to engage in a profession which requires so much skill and knowledge?'

"'I neither think nor care about your qualifications,' said the enraged wife: 'all I know is, that if you do not turn astrologer immediately, I will be divorced from you to-morrow.'

"The cobbler remonstrated, but in vain. The figure of the astrologer's wife, with her jewels and her slaves, had taken complete possession of Sittâra's imagination. All night it haunted her; she dreamt of nothing else, and on awaking declared she would leave the house, if her husband did not comply with her wishes. What could poor Ahmed do? He was no astrologer, but he was dotingly fond of his wife, and he could not bear the idea of losing her. He promised to obey; and having sold his little stock, bought an astrolabe, an astronomical almanac, and a table of the twelve signs of the zodiac. Furnished with these he went to the market-place, crying 'I am an astrologer! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac; I can calculate nativities; I can foretel every thing that is to happen!'

"No man was better known than Ahmed the cobbler. A crowd soon gathered round him. 'What, friend Ahmed,' said one, 'have you worked till your head is turned?' 'Are you tired of looking down at your last,' cried another, 'that you are now looking up at the planets?' These and a thousand other jokes assailed the ears of the poor cobbler, who notwithstanding continued to exclaim that he was an astrologer, having resolved on doing what he could to please his beautiful wife.

"It so happened that the king's jeweller was passing by. He was in great distress, having lost the richest ruby belonging to the crown. Every search had been made to recover this inestimable jewel, but to no purpose; and as the jeweller knew he could no longer conceal its loss from the king, he looked forward to death as inevitable. In this hopeless state, while wandering about the town, he reached the crowd around Ahmed, and asked what was the matter. 'Don't you know Ahmed the cobbler?' said one of the bystanders, laughing; 'he has been inspired, and is become an astrologer.'

"A drowning man will catch at a broken reed: the jeweller no sooner heard the sound of the word astrologer, than he went up to Ahmed, told him what had happened, and said, 'If you understand your art, you must be able to discover the king's ruby. Do so, and I will give you two hundred pieces of gold. But if you do not succeed within six hours, I will use all my influence at court to have you put to death as an impostor.'

"Poor Ahmed was thunderstruck. He stood long without being able to move or speak, reflecting on his misfortunes and grieving, above all, that his wife, whom he so loved, had, by her envy and selfishness, brought him to such a fearful alternative. Full of these sad thoughts, he exclaimed aloud, 'Oh woman, woman! thou art more baneful to the happiness of man than the poisonous dragon of the desert!'

"The lost ruby had been secreted by the jeweller's wife, who, disquieted by those alarms which ever attend guilt, sent one of her female slaves to watch her husband. This slave, on seeing her master speak to the astrologer, drew near; and when she heard Ahmed, after some moments of apparent abstraction, compare a woman to a poisonous dragon, she was satisfied that he must know every thing. She ran to her mistress, and, breathless with fear, cried, 'You are discovered, my dear mistress, you are discovered by a vile astrologer. Before six hours are past the whole story will be known, and you will become infamous, if you are even so fortunate as to escape with life, unless you can find some way of prevailing on him to be merciful.' She then related what she had seen and heard; and Ahmed's exclamation carried as complete conviction to the mind of the terrified mistress as it had done to that of her slave.

"The jeweller's wife, hastily throwing on her veil, went in search of the dreaded astrologer. When she found him, she threw herself at his feet, crying, 'Spare my honour and my life, and I will confess everything!'

"'What can you have to confess to me?' exclaimed Ahmed, in amazement.

"'Oh nothing! nothing with which you are not already acquainted. You know too well that I stole the ruby from the king's crown. I did so to punish my husband, who uses me most cruelly; and I thought by this means to obtain riches for myself, and to have him put to death. But you, most wonderful man, from whom nothing is hidden, have discovered and defeated my wicked plan. I beg only for mercy, and will do whatever you command me.'

"An angel from heaven could not have brought more consolation to Ahmed than did the jeweller's wife. He assumed all the dignified solemnity that became his new character, and

said, 'Woman! I know all thou hast done, and it is fortunate for thee that thou hast come to confess thy sin, and beg for mercy before it was too late. Return to thy house, put the ruby under the pillow of the couch on which thy husband sleeps; let it be laid on the side farthest from the door; and be satisfied thy guilt shall never be even suspected.'

"The jeweller's wife returned home, and did as she was desired. In an hour Ahmed followed her, and told the jeweller he had made his calculations, and found by the aspect of the sun and moon, and by the configuration of the stars, that the ruby was at that moment lying under the pillow of his couch, on the side farthest from the door. The jeweller thought Ahmed must be crazy: but as a ray of hope is like a ray from heaven to the wretched, he ran to his couch, and there, to his joy and wonder, found the ruby in the very place described. He came back to Ahmed, embraced him, called him his dearest friend and the preserver of his life, gave him the two hundred pieces of gold, declaring that he was the first astrologer of the age.

"These praises conveyed no joy to the poor cobbler, who returned home more thankful to God for his preservation than elated by his good fortune. The moment he entered the door, his wife ran up to him, and exclaimed, 'Well, my dear astrologer! what success?'

"'There!' said Ahmed, very gravely, 'there are two hundred pieces of gold: I hope you will be satisfied now, and not ask me again to hazard my life, as I have done this morning.' He then related all that had passed. But the recital made a very different impression on the lady from what these occurrences had made on Ahmed. Sittâra saw nothing but the gold, which would enable her to vie with the chief astrologer's wife at the Hemmâm. 'Courage!' she said, 'courage! my dearest husband. This is only your first labour in your new and noble profession. Go on, and prosper; and we shall become rich and happy.'

"In vain Ahmed remonstrated, and represented the danger; she burst into tears, and accused him of not loving her, ending with her usual threat of insisting upon a divorce.

"Ahmed's heart melted, and he agreed to make another trial. Accordingly, next morning he sallied forth with his

astrolabe, his twelve signs of the zodiac, and his almanac exclaiming, as before, 'I am an astrologer! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac; I can calculate nativities; I can foretel everything that is to happen!' A crowd again gathered round him, but it was now with wonder, and not ridicule; for the story of the ruby had gone abroad, and the voice of fame had converted the poor cobbler Ahmed into the ablest and most learned astrologer that was ever seen at Isfahan.

"While everybody was gazing at him, a lady passed by veiled. She was the wife of one of the richest merchants in the city, and had just been at the Hemmâm, where she had lost a valuable necklace and earrings. She was now returning home in great alarm, lest her husband should suspect her of having given her jewels to a lover. Seeing the crowd around Ahmed, she asked the reason of their assembling, and was informed of the whole story of the famous astrologer: how he had been a cobbler, was inspired with supernatural knowledge, and could, with the help of his astrolabe, his twelve signs of the zodiac, and his almanac, discover all that ever had, or ever would happen in the world. The story of the jeweller and the king's ruby was then told her, accompanied by a thousand wonderful circumstances which had never occurred. The lady, quite satisfied of his skill, went up to Ahmed, and mentioned her loss; saying, 'A man of your knowledge and penetration will easily discover my jewels: find them, and I will give you fifty pieces of gold.'

"The poor cobbler was quite confounded, and looked down, thinking only how to escape without a public exposure of his ignorance. The lady, in pressing through the crowd, had torn the lower part of her veil. Ahmed's downcast eyes noticed this; and wishing to inform her of it in a delicate manner, before it was observed by others, he whispered to her, 'Lady, look down at the rent.' The lady's head was full of her loss, and she was at that moment endeavouring to recollect how it could have occurred. Ahmed's speech brought it at once to her mind, and she exclaimed in delighted surprise, 'Stay here a few moments, thou great astrologer. I will return immediately with the reward thou so well deservest.' Saying this, she left

him, and soon returned, carrying in one hand the necklace and earrings, and in the other, a purse with the fifty pieces of gold. 'There is gold for thee,' she said, 'thou wonderful man! to whom all the secrets of nature are revealed. I had quite forgotten where I laid the jewels, and without thee should never have found them. But when thou desiredst me to look at the rent below, I instantly recollected the rent near the bottom of the wall in the bath-room, where, before undressing, I had hid them. I can now go home in peace and comfort; and it is all owing to thee, thou wisest of men!'

"After these words she walked away, and Ahmed returned to his home, thankful to Providence for his preservation, and fully resolved never again to tempt it. His handsome wife, however, could not yet rival the chief astrologer's lady in her appearance at the Hemmâm, so she renewed her entreaties and threats, to make her fond husband continue his career as an astrologer.

"About this time it happened that the king's treasury was robbed of forty chests of gold and jewels, forming the greater part of the wealth of the kingdom. The high treasurer and other officers of state used all diligence to find the thieves, but in vain. The king sent for his astrologer, and declared, that if the robbers were not detected by a stated time, he, as well as the principal ministers, should be put to death. Only one day of the short period given them remained. All their search had proved fruitless, and the chief astrologer, who had made his calculations and exhausted his art to no purpose, had quite resigned himself to his fate, when one of his friends advised him to send for the wonderful cobbler, who had become so famous for his extraordinary discoveries. Two slaves were immediately dispatched for Ahmed, whom they commanded to go with them to their master. 'You see the effects of your ambition,' said the poor cobbler to his wife; 'I am going to my death. The king's astrologer has heard of my presumption, and is determined to have me executed as an impostor.'

"On entering the palace of the chief astrologer, he was surprised to see that dignified person come forward to receive him, and lead him to the seat of honour, and not less so to hear himself thus addressed: 'The ways of heaven, most learned and

excellent Ahmed, are unsearchable. The high are often cast down and the low are lifted up. The whole world depends upon fate and fortune. It is my turn now to be depressed by fate; it is thine to be exalted by fortune.'

"His speech was here interrupted by a messenger from the king, who, having heard of the cobbler's fame, desired his attendance. Poor Ahmed now concluded that it was all over with him, and followed the king's messenger, praying to God that he would deliver him from this peril. When he came into the king's presence, he bent his body to the ground, and wished his majesty long life and prosperity. 'Tell me, Ahmed,' said the king, 'who has stolen my treasure?'

"'It was not one man,' answered Ahmed, after some consideration; 'there were forty thieves concerned in the robbery.'

"'Very well,' said the king: 'but who were they? and what have they done with my gold and jewels?'

"'These questions,' said Ahmed, 'I cannot now answer; but I hope to satisfy your majesty, if you will grant me forty days to make my calculations.'

"'I grant you forty days,' said the king; 'but when they are past, if my treasure is not found, your life shall pay the forfeit.'

"Ahmed returned to his house well pleased; for he resolved to take advantage of the time allowed him to fly from a city where his fame was likely to be his ruin. 'Well, Ahmed,' said his wife, as he entered, 'what news at court?'

"'No news at all,' said he, 'except that I am to be put to death at the end of forty days, unless I find forty chests of gold and jewels, which have been stolen from the royal treasury.'

"'But you will discover the thieves.'

"'How? by what means am I to find them?'

"'By the same art which discovered the ruby and the lady's necklace.'

"'The same art!' replied Ahmed. 'Foolish woman! thou knowest that I have no art, and that I have only pretended to it for the sake of pleasing thee. But I have had sufficient skill to gain forty days, during which time we may easily escape to some

other city, and, with the money I now possess, and the aid of my former occupation, we may still obtain an honest livelihood.'

"'An honest livelihood!' repeated his lady, with scorn. 'Will thy cobbling, thou mean, spiritless wretch! ever enable me to go to the Hemmân like the wife of the chief astrologer? Hear me, Ahmed! Think only of discovering the king's treasure. Thou hast just as good a chance of doing so as thou hadst of finding the ruby, and the necklace and earrings. At all events, I am determined thou shalt not escape; and shouldst thou attempt to run away, I will inform the king's officers, and have thee taken up and put to death, even before the forty days are expired. Thou knowest me too well, Ahmed, to doubt my keeping my word. So take courage, and endeavour to make thy fortune, and to place me in that rank of life to which my beauty entitles me.'

"The poor cobbler was dismayed at this speech; but knowing there was no hope of changing his wife's resolution, he resigned himself to his fate. 'Well,' said he, 'your will shall be obeyed. All I desire is to pass the few remaining days of my life as comfortably as I can. You know I am no scholar, and have little skill in reckoning; so there are forty dates: give me one of them every night after I have said my prayers, that I may put them in a jar, and, by counting them, may always see how many of the few days I have to live are gone.'

"The lady pleased, at carrying her point, took the dates, and promised to be punctual in doing what her husband desired.

"Meanwhile the thieves who had stolen the king's treasure, having been kept from leaving the city by fear of detection and pursuit, had received accurate information of every measure taken to discover them. One of them was among the crowd before the palace on the day the king sent for Ahmed; and hearing that the cobbler had immediately declared their exact number, he ran in a fright to his comrades, and exclaimed, 'We are all found out! Ahmed, the new astrologer, has told the king that there are forty of us.'

"'There needed no astrologer to tell that,' said the captain of the gang. 'This Ahmed, with all his simple good-nature, is a shrewd fellow. Forty chests having been stolen, he naturally

guessed that there must be forty thieves; and he has made a good hit, that is all: still it is prudent to watch him; for he certainly has made some strange discoveries. One of us must go to-night, after dark, to the terrace of this cobbler's house, and listen to his conversation with his handsome wife; for he is said to be very fond of her, and will, no doubt, tell her what success he has had in his endeavours to detect us.'

"Every body approved of this scheme; and soon after nightfall one of the thieves repaired to the terrace. He arrived there just as the cobbler had finished his evening prayers, and his wife was giving him the first date. 'Ah,' said Ahmed, as he took it, 'there is one of the forty.'

"The thief, hearing these words, hastened, in consternation, to the gang, and told them that the moment he took his post he had been perceived by the supernatural knowledge of Ahmed, who immediately told his wife that one of them was there. The spy's tale was not believed by his hardened companions; something was imputed to his fears; he might have been mistaken; in short, it was determined to send two men the next night at the same hour. They reached the house just as Ahmed, having finished his prayers, had received the second date, and heard him exclaim, 'My dear wife, to-night there are two of them!'

"The astonished thieves fled, and told their still incredulous comrades what they had heard. Three men were consequently sent the third night, four the fourth, and so on. Being afraid of venturing during the day, they always came as evening closed in, and just as Ahmed was receiving his date: hence they all in turn heard him say that which convinced them he was aware of their presence. On the last night they all went, and Ahmed exclaimed aloud, 'The number is complete! To-night the whole forty are here!'

"All doubts were now removed. It was impossible that Ahmed should have discovered them by any natural means. How could he ascertain their exact number? and night after night, without ever once being mistaken? He must have learnt it by his skill in astrology. Even the captain now yielded, in spite of his incredulity, and declared his opinion that it was hopeless to elude a man thus gifted; he therefore advised that

they should make a friend of the cobbler, by confessing every thing to him, and bribing him to secrecy by a share of the booty.

"His advice was approved of; and an hour before dawn they knocked at Ahmed's door. The poor man jumped out of bed, and, supposing the soldiers were come to lead him to execution, cried out, 'Have patience! I know what you are come for. It is a very unjust and wicked deed.'

"'Most wonderful man!' said the captain, as the door was opened, 'we are fully convinced that thou knowest why we are come, nor do we mean to justify the action of which thou speakest. Here are two thousand pieces of gold, which we will give thee, provided thou wilt swear to say nothing more about the matter.'

"'Say nothing about it!' said Ahmed. 'Do you think it possible I can suffer such gross wrong and injustice without complaining, and making it known to all the world?'

"'Have mercy upon us!' exclaimed the thieves, falling on their knees; 'only spare our lives, and we will restore the royal treasure.'

"The cobbler started, rubbed his eyes to see if he were asleep or awake; and being satisfied that he was awake, and that the men before him were really the thieves, he assumed a solemn tone, and said—'Guilty men! ye are persuaded that ye cannot escape from my penetration, which reaches unto the sun and moon, and knows the position and aspect of every star in the heavens. Your timely repentance has saved you. But ye must immediately restore all that ye have stolen. Go straightway, and carry the forty chests exactly as ye found them, and bury them a foot deep under the southern wall of the old ruined Hemmâm, beyond the king's palace. If ye do this punctually, your lives are spared; but if ye fail in the slightest degree, destruction will fall upon you and your families.'

"The thieves promised obedience to his commands, and departed. Ahmed then fell on his knees, and returned thanks to God for this signal mark of his favour. About two hours after the royal guards came, and desired Ahmed to follow them. He said he would attend them as soon as he had taken leave of his wife, to whom he determined not to impart what had occurred

until he saw the result. He bade her farewell very affectionately; she supported herself with great fortitude on this trying occasion, exhorting her husband to be of good cheer, and said a few words about the goodness of Providence. But the fact was, Sittâra fancied, that if God took the worthy cobbler to himself, her beauty might attract some rich lover, who would enable her to go to the Hemmâm with as much splendour as the astrologer's lady, whose image, adorned with jewels and fine clothes, and surrounded by slaves, still haunted her imagination.

"The decrees of Heaven are just: a reward suited to their merits awaited Ahmed and his wife. The good man stood with a cheerful countenance before the king, who was impatient for his arrival, and immediately said, 'Ahmed, thy looks are promising; hast thou discovered my treasure?'

"'Does your majesty require the thieves or the treasure? The stars will only grant one or the other,' said Ahmed, looking at his table of astrological calculations. 'Your majesty must make your choice. I can deliver up either, but not both.'

"'I should be sorry not to punish the thieves,' answered the king; 'but if it must be so, I choose the treasure.'

"'And you give the thieves a full and free pardon?'

"'I do, provided I find my treasure untouched.'

"'Then,' said Ahmed, 'if your majesty will follow me, the treasure shall be restored to you.'

"The king and all his nobles followed the cobbler to the ruins of the old Hemmâm. There, casting his eyes towards Heaven, Ahmed muttered some sounds, which were supposed by the spectators to be magical conjurations, but which were in reality the prayers and thanksgivings of a sincere and pious heart to God, for his wonderful deliverance. When his prayer was finished, he pointed to the southern wall, and requested that his majesty would order his attendants to dig there. The work was hardly begun, when the whole forty chests were found in the same state as when stolen, with the treasurer's seal upon them still unbroken.

"The king's joy knew no bounds: he embraced Ahmed, and immediately appointed him his chief astrologer, assigned to him

an apartment in the palace, and declared that he should marry his only daughter,* as it was his duty to promote the man whom God had so singularly favoured, and had made instrumental in restoring the treasures of his kingdom. The young princess, who was more beautiful than the moon, was not dissatisfied with her father's choice; for her mind was stored with religion and virtue, and she had learnt to value beyond all earthly qualities that piety and learning which she believed Ahmed to possess. The royal will was carried into execution as soon as formed. The wheel of fortune had taken a complete turn. The morning had found Ahmed in a wretched hovel, rising from a sorry bed, in the expectation of losing his life: in the evening he was the lord of a rich palace, and married to the only daughter of a powerful king. But this change did not alter his character. As he had been meek and humble in adversity, he was modest and gentle in prosperity. Conscious of his own ignorance, he continued to ascribe his good fortune solely to the favour of Providence. He became daily more attached to the beautiful and virtuous princess whom he had married; and he could not help contrasting her character with that of his former wife, whom he had ceased to love, and of whose unreasonable and unfeeling vanity he was now fully sensible.

"As Ahmed did not return to his house, Sittâra only heard of his elevation from common rumour. She saw with despair that her wishes for his advancement had been more than accomplished, but that all her own desires had been entirely frustrated. Her husband was chief astrologer—the very situation she had set her heart on; he was rich enough to enable his wife to surpass all the ladies of Isfahan, in the number of her slaves, and the finery of her clothes and jewels, whenever she went to the Hemmâm: but he had married a princess; and his former wife, according to custom, was banished from his house, and condemned to live on whatever pittance she might receive from a man whose love and esteem she had for ever forfeited. These thoughts distracted her mind: her envy was excited by the accounts she daily heard of Ahmed's happiness, and of the beauty of the

* It is very common in the East for the daughters of monarchs to be married to men eminent for piety or learning, however low their origin.

princess; and she now became anxious only for his destruction, looking on him as the sole cause of her disappointment.

"An opportunity of indulging her revengeful feelings was not long wanting. The king of Seestan had sent an emerald of extraordinary size and brilliancy as a present to the king of Irak. It was carefully enclosed in a box, to which there were three keys, and one of them was given in charge to each of the three confidential servants employed to convey it. When they reached Isfahan, the box was opened, but the emerald was gone. Nothing could exceed their consternation; each accused the other: as the lock was not broken, it was evident one of them must be the thief. They consulted what was to be done; to conceal what had happened was impossible; the very attempt would have brought death on them all. It was resolved, therefore, to lay the whole matter before the king, and beg that by his great wisdom he would detect the culprit, and that he would show mercy to the other two.

"The king heard the story with astonishment, but was unable to find any clue by which he might ascertain the truth. He summoned his vizier and all the wisest men of his court; but they were as much at a loss as their master. The report spread through the city; and Sittâra thought she had now the means of working her husband's ruin. She solicited a private audience of his majesty, on the plea of having a communication of importance to make. Her request was granted. On entering the royal presence she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, 'Pardon, O king! my having so long concealed the guilt of my husband Ahmed, whose alliance is a disgrace to the royal blood. He is no astrologer, but an associate of thieves, and by that means alone did he discover the royal treasure. If any doubts are entertained of my speaking the truth, let his majesty command Ahmed to recover the emerald which the servants of the king of Seestan have stolen. Surely the man who by his wonderful art ascertained where all the treasure of the kingdom was concealed, will find it an easy matter to discover a single precious stone.'

"The king, who loved his son-in-law, was grieved by this information. Still, as the honour of his family was concerned, he resolved to put Ahmed to the test; and, if he found him an impostor, to vindicate the royal dignity by his condign punish-

ment. He therefore sent for Ahmed, told him what had happened, and added, 'I give you twenty days to discover who stole the emerald. If you succeed, you shall be raised to the highest honours of the state. If not, you shall suffer death for having deceived me.'

"Poor Ahmed quitted the presence quite disconsolate. The princess, perceiving his affliction, inquired the cause. Ahmed was by nature as sincere as he was pious and humble. He related, without concealment or disguise, every event of his past life; and concluded with these words: 'You must see, from what I have said, how incapable I am of doing what your father enjoins. My life must answer for it; and my only consolation is, that I shall, in twenty days, relieve you from a husband, whom from this time you must despise.'

"'I only love you the better, my dear Ahmed, for your sincerity and truth,' said the princess. 'One, who has been so favoured by Heaven, must be dear to every pious heart. Be of good cheer; I will turn astrologer this time, and see whether I can find out the thief. All I require is, that you endeavour to be composed, while I consult the stars and make my calculations.'

"Ahmed, delighted with this proof of affection, and reassured of the confidence of her manner, promised to be obedient; and said he would only venture to assist her exertions by his earnest prayers to that Power which had never deserted him.

"The princess immediately invited the messengers from the king of Seestan to her palace. They were surprised at the invitation, and still more at their reception. 'You are strangers,' she said to them, 'and come from a powerful king: it is my wish to show you every attention. As to the lost emerald, think no more of it; it is a mere trifle. I will intercede with the king, my father, to give himself no further concern on the subject, being convinced that it has been lost by one of those strange accidents for which it is impossible to account.'

"The princess entertained the strangers for several days, and during that time the emerald seemed to be forgotten. She conversed with them freely, inquiring particularly of Seestan, and the countries they had seen on their travels. Flattered by her condescension, they became confident of their safety; and

were delighted with their royal patroness. The princess, seeing them completely off their guard, turned the conversation one evening on wonderful occurrences; and after each had related his story, said, 'I will now recount to you some events of my own life, which you will, I think, deem more extraordinary than any you have ever heard.

"'I am my father's only child, and have therefore been a favourite from my birth. I was brought up in the belief that I could command whatever this world can afford; and was taught that unbounded liberality is the first and most princely of virtues. I early resolved to surpass every former example of generosity. I thought my power of doing good, and making every body happy, was as unlimited as my wish to do so; and I could not conceive the existence of misery beyond my power to relieve. When I was eighteen I was betrothed to my cousin, a young prince, who excelled all others in beauty of person and nobleness of mind; and I fancied myself at the summit of happiness. It chanced, however, that on the morning of my nuptials I went to walk in a garden near the palace, where I had been accustomed to spend some hours daily from my childhood. The old gardener, with whose cheerfulness I had often been amused, met me. Seeing him look very miserable, I asked him what was the matter? He evaded a direct answer; but I insisted upon his disclosing the cause of his grief, declaring at the same time my determination to remove it.

"'"You cannot relieve me," said the old man, with a deep sigh; 'it is out of your power, my beloved princess, to heal the wound of which I am dying.'

"'My pride was roused, and I exclaimed, 'I swear—'

"'"Do not swear!" said the gardener, seizing my hand.

"'"I do swear!" I repeated, irritated by the opposition. 'I will stop at nothing to make you happy; and I further swear, that I will not leave this spot until you reveal the grief which preys upon you.'

"'The old man, seeing my resolution, spake with tremulous emotion as follows: 'Princess, you know not what you have done. Behold a man who has dared for these two years to look upon you with an eye of admiration; his love has at length reached such a pitch, that without you he must be wretched for

ever; and unless you consent to meet him in the garden to-night, and become his bride instead of that of the prince, he must die.'

"'Shocked by this unforeseen declaration, and trembling at the thought of my oath, I tried to reason with the old gardener, and offered him all the wealth I possessed. 'I told you,' he replied, 'beautiful princess, that you could not make me happy: I endeavoured to prevent your rash vow; and nothing but that should have drawn from me the secret of my heart. Death, I know, is my fate; for I cannot live and see you the wife of another. Leave me to die. Go to your husband; go to the enjoyment of your pomp and riches; but never again pretend to the exercise of a power which depends upon a thousand circumstances that no human being can regulate or control.'

"'This speech conveyed a bitter reproach. I would have sacrificed my life a hundred times, sooner than stain my honour by marrying this man; but I had made a vow in the face of Heaven, and to break it seemed sacrilege. Besides, I earnestly wished to die undeceived in my favourite notion, that I could make all who came near me happy. Under the struggle of these different feelings, I told the gardener his desire should be granted, and that I would be in the garden an hour before midnight. After this assurance I went away, resolved in my own mind not to outlive the disgrace to which I had doomed myself.

"'I passed the day in the deepest melancholy. A little before midnight I contrived to dismiss my attendants, and, arrayed in my bridal apparel, which was covered with the richest jewels, I went towards the garden. I had not proceeded many yards, when I was met by a thief, who, seizing me, said, 'Let me strip you, madam, of these unnecessary ornaments: if you make the least noise, instant death awaits you.' In my state of mind such threats frightened me little. I wished to die, but I wished, before I died, to fulfil my vow. I told my story to the thief, beseeching him to let me pass, and pledging my word to return, that he might not be disappointed of his booty. After some hesitation, he allowed me to proceed.

"'I had not gone many steps, when I encountered a furious lion, which had broken loose from my father's menagerie.

Knowing the merciful nature of this animal towards the weak and defenceless, I dropped on my knees, repeated my story, and assured him, if he would let me me fulfil my vow, I would come back to him as ready to be destroyed as he could be to make me his prey. The lion stepped aside, and I went into the garden.

"'I found the old gardener all impatience for my arrival. He flew to meet me, exclaiming I was an angel. I told him I was resigned to my engagement, but had not long to live. He started, and asked what I meant. I gave him an account of my meeting with the thief and the lion. 'Wretch that I am!' cried the gardener; 'how much misery have I caused! but bad as I am, I am not worse than a thief, or a beast of prey; which I should be, did I not absolve you from your vow, and assure you the only way in which you can now make me happy, is by forgiving my wicked presumption.'

"'I was completely relieved by these words, and granted the forgiveness desired; but having determined in spite of the gardener's remonstrances, to keep my promises to the thief and the lion, I refused to accept his protection. On leaving the garden, the lion met me. 'Noble lion,' I said, 'I am come, as I promised you.' I then related to him how the gardener had absolved me from my vow, and I expressed a hope that the king of beasts would not belie his renown for generosity. The lion again stepped aside, and I proceeded to the thief, who was still standing where I left him. I told him I was now in his power, but that, before he stripped me, I must relate to him what had happened since our last meeting. Having heard me, he turned away, saying, 'I am not meaner than a poor gardener, nor more cruel than a hungry lion: I will not injure what they have respected.'

"'Delighted with my escapes, I returned to my father's palace, where I was united to my cousin, with whom I lived happily till his death; persuaded, however, that the power of human beings to do good is very limited, and that when they leave the narrow path marked out for them by their Maker, they not only lose their object, but often wander far into error and guilt, by attempting more than it is possible to perform.'

"'The princess paused, and was glad to see her guests so enchanted with her story, that it had banished every other thought

from their minds. After a few moments she turned to one of them, and asked, 'Now which, think you, showed the greatest virtue in his forbearance—the gardener, the thief, or the lion?'

"'The gardener assuredly,' was his answer; 'to abandon so lovely a prize, when so nearly his own.'

"'And what is your opinion?' said the princess to his neighbour.

"'I think the lion was the most generous,' he replied; 'he must have been very hungry, and in such a state it was great forbearance to abstain from devouring so delicate a morsel.'

"You both seem to me to be quite wrong,' said the third, impatiently; 'the thief had by far the most merit. Gracious Heavens! to have within his grasp such wealth, and to refrain from taking it! I could not have believed it possible, unless the princess herself had assured us of the fact.'

"The princess now, assuming an air of dignity, said to the first who spoke, 'You, I perceive, are an admirer of the ladies;' to the second, 'You are an epicure;' and then turning to the third, who was already pale with fright, 'You, my friend, have the emerald in your possession. You have betrayed yourself, and nothing but an immediate confession can save your life.'

"The guilty man's countenance removed all doubt; and when the princess renewed her assurances of safety, he threw himself at her feet, acknowledged his offence, and gave her the emerald, which he carried concealed about him. The princess rose, went to her husband, and said, 'There, Ahmed, what do you think of the success of my calculations?' She then related the whole circumstance, and bade him carry the jewel to her father, adding, 'I trust he will feel a greater admiration than ever for my husband, the wonderful astrologer!'

"Ahmed took the emerald in silent astonishment, and went with it to the king, of whom he requested a private audience. On its being granted, he presented the emerald. The king, dazzled by its brilliancy and size, loaded his son-in-law with the most extravagant praises, extolling him as superior to any astrologer who had ever been seen in the world. Poor Ahmed, conscious how little he deserved such praise, threw himself at the king's feet, and begged that he might be allowed to speak the truth, as he was readier to die than to continue imposing on

his majesty's goodness. 'You impose on me!' said the king, 'that is impossible. Did you not recover my treasure? Have you not brought me this emerald?'

"'True, O king!' said Ahmed, 'I have done so, but without possessing that science for which I have gained a reputation.' He then told his history from first to last with perfect sincerity. The king showed great displeasure while listening to his earlier adventures, but when Ahmed related the story of the emerald, intermingling his tale with fervent expressions of admiration for the wonderful wisdom and virtue of the princess, he heard him with delight. After he had finished, the king summoned his vizier and chief counsellors, and desired that his daughter also might attend, and when they were all assembled, he spake as follows; 'Daughter, I have learnt the history of thy husband from his own lips. I have also heard much in confirmation of the belief I have long entertained, that thy knowledge and goodness are even greater than thy beauty. They prove that thou wert born to rule; and I only obey the will of Heaven, and consult the happiness of my people, when I resign my power into thy hands, being resolved to seek that repose which my declining years require. As to thy husband, thou wilt dispose of him as it pleases thee. His birth, I always knew, was low, but I thought that his wisdom and learning raised him to a level with the highest rank; these, it now appears, he does not possess. If thou deemest his alliance a disgrace, divorce him. If, on the other hand, thou art willing to keep him as thy husband, do so, and give him such share as thou thinkest fit in the authority which I now commit to thee.'

"The princess knelt to kiss her father's hand, and answered, 'May my father's life and reign be prolonged for his daughter's happiness, and for that of his subjects! I am a weak woman, altogether unequal to the task which his too fond love would impose on me. If my humble counsel is listened to, my father will continue to govern his people, whose gratitude and veneration will make obedience light, and rule easy. As to Ahmed, I love and esteem him; he is sensible, sincere, and pious, and I deem myself fortunate in having for my husband a man so peculiarly favoured and protected by Heaven. What, my dear father, are high rank or brilliant talents without religion and

virtue? They are as plants which bear gaudy blossoms, but yield no fruit.'

"The king was delighted with his daughter's wisdom and affection. 'Your advice,' he said, 'my beloved daughter, shall be followed. I will continue to govern my kingdom, while you and Ahmed shall assist me with your counsels.'

"The good cobbler was soon afterwards nominated vizier; and the same virtue and piety, which had obtained him respect in the humblest sphere of life, caused him to be loved and esteemed in the high station to which he was elevated.

"The designs of Sittâra were discovered, but her guilt was pardoned. She was left with a mere subsistence, a prey to disappointment; for she continued to the last to sigh for that splendour she had seen displayed by the chief astrologer's wife at the Hemmâm; thereby affording a salutary lesson to those who admit envy into their bosoms, and endeavour to attain their ends by unreasonable and unjustifiable means."

CHAPTER XXI.

Mârâgâ—Naser-ood-Deen — Persian Servants—Jaghatty River — Kûrdistan —Robbery—Arrival at Sennah—Ardelan—Conclusion.

MARAGA, where we halted some days, is a beautiful town, famous in eastern history as the place where Hoolakoo, the grandson of Chenghiz, relaxed from his warlike toils, and assembled round him men of the first genius of the age; who have commemorated his love of science, and given him more fame as its munificent patron than he acquired by all his conquests. Amongst these was Naser-ood-Deen, who, in the thirteenth century formed his celebrated astronomical tables.

We approached our encampment by a range of low hills, the top of which had been levelled to aid Naser-ood-Deen, and other astronomers, in making their observations. We traced distinctly the foundations of the observatory, which had been constructed for the favourite philosopher of the Tartar prince. In this observatory there was, according to one of the best Mahomedan works,* a species of apparatus to represent the celestial sphere, with the signs of the zodiac, the conjunctions, transits, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies. Through a perforation in the dome, the rays of the sun were admitted, so as to strike upon certain lines on the pavement in a way to indicate, in degrees and minutes, the altitude and declination of that luminary

* The writer of the Hubeeb-ul-Syur is the authority quoted by Major Price, from whose history of the Mahomedans this account is taken. According to this work, an extraordinary difference was found in the sun's altitude and declination, at corresponding periods, between what was exhibited in the tables now framed by Naser-ood-Deen, and in those formerly established; and an error of surprising magnitude was detected in the mode that had hitherto been observed for adjusting the commencement of the new year.

during every season, and to mark the time and hour of the day throughout the year. It was further supplied with a map of the terrestrial globe, in all its climates or zones, exhibiting the several regions of the habitable world, as well as a general outline of the ocean, with the numerous islands contained in its bosom; and, according to the Mahomedan author, all these were so perspicuously arranged and delineated, as at once to remove, by the clearest demonstration, every doubt from the mind of the student!

After contemplating for some time what remained of a work, which had been dedicated to celestial objects, amidst scenes of rapine and bloodshed, we were reminded that we had terrestrial occupations to attend to, being called to breakfast at our tents. These were pitched on the green banks of the river that flows past Mârâgâ, and over which are two admirable bridges of six elliptical arches each, built by the present governer, Ahmed Khan, a nobleman of high rank and influence.

On approaching the tents we were met by fishermen with some trout carried on willow branches, which were passed through their gills, exactly in the same manner as is customary in Scotland. Those of our mission, and amongst them the Elchee, who belonged to that country, loudly expressed their delight with the willows, the fish, and the clear stream from which they were taken. We had the trout fried for breakfast; and during that meal, Persia, its kings, princes, astronomers, armies—all were forgotten, and nothing was talked of but the Esk, the Ewis, the Liddle, and the Teviot; important rivers no doubt to the natives of Eskdale, Ewisdale, Liddisdale, and Teviotdale, but probably as little known to many of my English readers, as to the inhabitants of Aderbejan.

I visited a small tomb whilst at Mârâgâ, in which, according to common report, the remains of Hoolakoo are interred, as also those of his Christian queen Delghooz Khâtoon. To this lady, even Mahomedan writers ascribe some of the most munificent actions of her Moghul lord, who was attached to her in a very extraordinary degree. She is reputed to have been a great proficient in science, and to have honoured with her peculiar patronage and favour the celebrated Naser-ood-Deen, of whom I have already spoken. The reputation of this great man had nearly proved his

ruin. A young chief, of a gloomy disposition, belonging to the dreaded sect of Hoosein, who dwelt in the north-western mountains of Persia, having heard of his fame, and thinking to profit by his wisdom, commanded that he should be brought to his presence. The mandate was instantly obeyed; for his followers gave a devoted obedience to their chief, being fanatics of the same sect as the subjects of the Old Man of the Mountain,* whose history is familiar to all readers of the wars of the crusades.

A few men were sent in disguise to Bokhara, and Naser-ood-Deen was seized and carried off while walking in his garden. He was made over from one party to another, till he found himself at the "Eagle's Nest:" so the residence of the young prince, on the top of a high mountain, was called. His value, we are told, was fully appreciated at this barbarous court. While, however, they honoured him with every attention, they took precautions to prevent all possibility of escape. It was during this confinement that he wrote the celebrated treatise on ethics,† which has raised his fame as high for philosophy as for astronomy.

The desire of liberating a genius of whom his country was justly proud, was, we are told, one of the principal motives which led Hoolakoo to attack and destroy this abode of dreaded assassins;‡ and when their boasted Eagle's Nest was taken, the emperor rejoiced less in its capture, than in having released Naser-ood-Deen, who was immediately invested with a dress of honour, and promoted to high employment. But it was to the favour and patronage of the Christian princess Delghooz Khâtoon, that this philosopher owed the opportunities he enjoyed at Mârâgâ, of making his name coeval with that of oriental science.

No less than five of my friends, who had been long absent on their travels, joined us at Mârâgâ. Four of them I could hardly recognize, being dressed in Persian clothes, and having large whiskers and long beards. They told us wondrous tales of

* The first who established this sect in Persia was Hoosein Subah. His followers hold the same tenets as those of Ismael in Egypt.—Vid. Hist. Persia, vol. i. p. 395.

† This treatise is called the Akhlâk-e-Nâsiree, and is deemed one of the most valuable works which the Mahomedans possess on moral philosophy.

‡ The English word assassin is said to be derived from the term Hooseinee, by which this sect was known.

Seestan, Balochistan, Hamadan, and other countries in which they had been. We were now a party of fourteen, but we did not remain long together: some were detached to drill Persian soldiers, while others were sent to survey and report upon the soil and population of different districts of this once famous kingdom.

The Elchee had returned from his first mission by the route of Hamadan: he now determined to go to Bagdad by that of Kûrdistan, the ancient Carduchia, a province to which the sword and the pen of Xenophon have given celebrity. I was delighted at the prospect of visiting this country, which I found, by a Persian History* belonging to the Elchee, had a particular claim to the attention of the Christian world. It was the birth-place of the famous Saladin,† whose sword arrested the progress of the conquerors of Palestine.

According to my author, Shadi Ben Mirvan, a native of Kûrdistan, was kutwal or magistrate of Tekreet.‡ In this office he was succeeded by his eldest son, Nizâm-ood-Deen Ayoob, who was compelled to leave the country in consequence of his younger brother, Assad-ood-Deen, having, in defence of an injured female, killed a man of a powerful family. The governor of the province is said to have admired the spirit and humanity which prompted this deed; but being unable to protect the brothers against the relations of the deceased, he recommended and aided their flight. They went first to Moosul,§ and thence to Balbec, the prince of which, Noor-ood-Deen, was an intimate ally of Azad Ismael, the Waly of Egypt, who was then warring, according to the Mahomedan writer, against the accursed infidels of Europe! Noor-ood-Deen, pleased with the bold, manly character of Assad-ood-Deen, sent him in command of his forces to Egypt; where, our Eastern author tells us, he rose so high in the favour of the Waly, that he employed him to put to death his vizier, and rewarded him

* This work is called Tarikh Akrâd, or the History of the Kûrds. It was given to the Elchee by the Kûrd chief of Mohezzee.

† The Mahomedan name of this hero is Sallâh-ood-Deen.

‡ This fort was taken from the Turks by Timoor, after a memorable siege. Vide Hist. Persia, vol. i. p. 465.

§ The ancient Nineveh.

with the vacant office! He died soon after,* and his high station devolved upon his nephew Saladin, son of Nizâm-ood-Deen Ayoob.

The young Saladin is described by this author in glowing colours. His qualities were of the highest order; even in youth he soon outstript all competitors. He became the sole manager of affairs in Egypt under the title of Mallik Nasser: he wrote to the prince of Balbec to permit his father to join him, and on the twenty-fourth day of Rejib, in the year of the Hegira 565, the old man, who a few years before had considered himself and his family ruined, on being compelled to abandon the office of a petty magistrate, was met and welcomed at some distance from his son's palace by the Waly of Egypt; for that prince thought he could not too highly honour the parent of the man, to whom he ascribed the safety and glory of his country.

Saladin wished to make over his station to his father; but the latter declined the offer, and continued, during the three years he lived, without any public employment. The Waly of Egypt having died, Saladin, already in possession of the power, succeeded to the name of sovereign of that kingdom. The riches of which he became possessed are minutely described by the Persian author. Amongst them was a staff of emeralds of extraordinary value, and a library of one hundred thousand select volumes.

Noor-ood-Deen, the prince of Balbec, who had raised this family, becoming jealous of Saladin's power, endeavoured to destroy him; but all his efforts were defeated, and at his death Syria was added to Egypt.

Thus originated the power of the celebrated Saladin. His recovery of Jerusalem, the siege of Ascalon, and his wars with those who are termed infidels, are given at great length, and the boldest of the Christian heroes are often represented as flying before his victorious sword. I looked through this volume, for an account of the wonderful achievements of our gallant Richard, and some mention of his fair sister Matilda; but I looked in vain, and the omission produced no favourable impression of an author who could pass over subjects so dear to every English reader of the wars of Palestine.

* Assad-ood-Deen's death took place in the year of the Hegira 564. [illegible]

The day before we left Mârâgâ, our muleteers mutinied. They refused to proceed through Kûrdistan, alleging that the inhabitants were all robbers and murderers, and delighted in nothing more than plundering and putting to death Persians, from whom most of the tribes of that rugged country differ as much in habits as in religion, being half savages and of the sect of Soonees. The Elchee was only able to quiet them by promising to replace any mules which might be stolen, and to defend them if attacked.

The temper of the Elchee, which had been ruffled by this occurrence, was still more so by the conduct of one of his principal servants, Feridoon Beg, who, besides receiving handsome pay, bore a gold stick, and took precedence of all the state servants on occasions of ceremony. This man having been sent with two hundred piastres to the servants of the chief of Mârâgâ, kept back twenty. Being detected, his only defence was, that the fellows had cheated him and others, by intercepting part of a present from their master to the domestics of the Elchee.

The excuse was not admitted. Feridoon was degraded, and being a favourite, had little sympathy. One of his companions, approving of the indignation his conduct had excited, said, "What a mean rascal! to behave as he has done; and all for twenty piastres!" This speech increased the Elchee's passion, who reprobated the man for looking at the amount of the sum taken, not at the immorality of the action. "You, no doubt," said he, "when you begin, will be a rogue on a large scale." He proceeded in his anger from individuals to communities, and finished by declaring, that there was neither truth nor honesty to be found in Persia.

This was so much the general impression, that we were delighted to find the Elchee's eyes at length opened; but in the evening, when some of us expressed concurrence in his opinions, what was our surprise to find that these had been completely changed by a few hours of reflection!

"I was," he said, "very unreasonable this morning, and am quite ashamed of myself. What could you expect?" said he to a gentleman who had mentioned some instances of being cheated in the purchase of horses and mules, as well as by servants; "what, I ask, could you expect to happen to an envoy

from Persia, who landed at Hull, with the reputation of having plenty of money; and proceeded to the court of St. James's, furnishing himself and suite with horses, bought without experience, and hiring a numerous train of servants, with little if any inquiry as to their character? Do you think our laws would secure his being supplied in Yorkshire with horses worth what he gave for them, or prevent his being cheated and robbed, by men who hang loose on society, and who consequently would crowd to such a master?

"Now what is our situation in Persia? We fit out a mission at Abusheher, buy such horses as are offered, and hire every good-looking fellow who presents himself. We are in fact compelled to do so; for in a country where religious prejudices are so strong, none but those who cannot get bread elsewhere would come to serve Faringees, unless tempted by the hopes of great gain, through fair or unfair means.

"This, if you reflect, must be particularly the case in a country where laws have little force, but where, whatever of morality there is in the lower orders, chiefly depends upon their religious sentiments, or feelings of allegiance and attachment to superiors; and amongst equals, on the ties which subsist in families and tribes. Their religious prejudices are all against us, and we neither have, nor can have, any claim on their allegiance or attachment, nor the benefit of family ties to guard us in our occasional visits to this country; and we should not therefore wonder that we are sometimes cheated; far less should we proceed, as I did this morning, to condemn a whole nation because we discover such crimes in those around us. We ought, in justice to the Persians, to refer much of what has occurred to our peculiar situation in their country, and not write them all down rogues, unless we ascertain that they are, as a people, in the habit of behaving towards each other, as we have found a few of them behave towards us."

Such was the Elchee's doctrine, to which there neither was any expression of assent or dissent. Some probably believed there was reason in what he stated, while others thought there was no use in arguing with him on a subject, on which he was known to be very prejudiced and impatient.

Two more marches brought us to the banks of the river

Jaghattee, which rising among the mountains of Kûrdistan, after fertilizing several valleys in that country, and in the province of Aderbejan, flows into the lake of Oormeah. We halted here some days; and were so delighted with the fishing, shooting, and hunting, near our encampment, that we should have remained longer, but for a report that the plague was in a neighbouring village. This determined the Elchee to move; nor could he be induced to remain by the assurance of some Kûrds, that this village was the utmost limit to which the scourge had ever been known to extend in this quarter.

It would fill a volume, were I to relate the amusing and interesting accounts we received from our enterprising friends; who had not only visited many of the least known parts of Persia, but had penetrated into the wide and barbarous countries between that kingdom and India. Their travels, if ever noticed, must belong to a future work; none of them excited my curiosity more than those of a gallant and valued friend, who has since died the death of a soldier. He had traversed the arid plains of Seestan, and visited the famous cities of Mushed and Yezd in Khorassan. As he knew Yezd was the chief residence of the few Guebres, or worshippers of fire, who still remain in Persia, and who live there, under the protection of their chief, who is one of the principal magistrates of the town, he had furnished himself with letters from the Parsees or Guebres at Bombay, to their friends at Yezd. Among these was one from Khoosroo, a well known poet, who, like many others, is more famous for the quantity than the quality of his rhymes. My friend had kept a copy of this singular production, which was in verse.

After informing the chief to whom this letter was addressed that the person who would present it was endowed with many qualities, Khoosroo terms him the Vakeel or agent of the Elchee, whom he describes as a man "who never took rest for one moment, in one place."* This characteristic hit made us all laugh. The Elchee, while he joined in our mirth, defended himself against this charge of perpetual motion as well as he could. "Laugh away, gentlemen," said he, "but recollect one thing—I have never changed my abode, but by the orders of my superiors."

* "Kih yek dem na geered be-jahee kerrâ."

We went from the banks of the Jaghattee to a village called Koozlee. Ascending to the top of a hill, we had a fine view of Kûrdistan, which appeared, far as the eye could reach, an interminable cluster of hills. A few scattered huts, and several small encampments, were all we could see of human dwellings; and their distance from each other indicated that stage of civilization which precedes the congregating of men into villages and towns.

The impressions this prospect made upon our minds, as to the character of the people on whose rugged land we were now entering, were confirmed the ensuing morning at three o'clock, by the cry of "Robbers, robbers! Murder, murder!" All was instantly in confusion; trumpets sounded, drums beat to arms; boots destined for the right leg were put on the left, while we huddled on our clothes, and ran to our posts. It was too dark to see ten yards; but we soon discovered that there were no assailants in the camp. Many of our party who had gone in front came back, and every one had a more alarming tale than the other. According to them, several men were killed, and a hundred mules plundered. While listening to these accounts, a Portuguese servant came galloping into camp, exclaiming, "They are murdering all the Christians! May the Lord preserve us!" The pious ejaculations of the affrighted Joseph caused much merriment; for, as he was the only Christian who had been in danger, it was evident that his alarm, whatever character he desired to give it, was all for himself.

The Elchee halted till daylight, and then proceeded towards the village; where he found his mehmandar, two Kûrdish chiefs, and three or four principal men of the country, consulting what was to be done. They entreated him to allow them to trace the robbers, and recover what had been plundered, which was now found to amount to five mule loads; but circumstances led to a suspicion that some of those who gave this advice were concerned in the robbery, and the Elchee was consequently in no temper to listen to their counsel. He told them not to speak to him, as he neither wanted their advice nor aid: being resolved to deter the natives of Kûrdistan from ever again meddling with an European envoy. They endeavoured, but in vain, to pacify him; he ordered the infantry and baggage

to proceed to the next stage, twelve miles distant, and with the cavalry, divided into three parties, swept the country for eight miles, in the direction in which the mules had been carried off. Three mules and some of the plundered articles were found; and as a security for the remainder, nine head persons of hamlets and petty tribes were seized, and taken to our encampment. The mehmandar and some Kûrdish chiefs entreated for their release, and crowds of women and children followed us imploring mercy; but all received the same answer; "When every article which has been taken is restored or what cannot be found is paid for, then, and not a moment before, shall these men be released."

The Elchee either was or pretended to be in a great rage. The mehmandar, who was a favourite, and used to joke with him, became alarmed: "I now see," said he, "what I had before heard, but could not believe, that you Faringees, when in a passion, are as great savages as we are, or even as the Kûrds."

When we reached our encampment, the hostages were placed in strict confinement, and not allowed to communicate with any of their families or tribes. The consequence was what we anticipated. The lost mules and the greater part of the baggage were brought back. Nothing remained unaccounted for, but some clothes belonging to the Elchee and his personal servants. These were valued at seven hundred and twenty piastres; which, seeing no abatement would be allowed, were at last paid by the collector of the district.* Some hours after the Elchee sent for this officer, and returned him three hundred and twenty piastres, the amount of his personal loss. This unexpected consideration put the collector in good humour. The prisoners, who had been alarmed for their lives, were not only released but feasted; and the Elchee made small, but valued, presents of coloured handkerchiefs, knives, and scissors, to several of their wives and children, who had followed them to our camp. In short, a gloomy morning was succeeded by a sunshiny evening, and our Kûrd friends left us, declaring they would never again plunder any of our tribe; a promise they will probably keep or break, according as they think they can measure strength with those of our race who may visit their country.

* Zabiteh.

The Elchee having become not only calm, but in high spirits with his success, was visited by the mehmandar and others, who assured him the news of these transactions would soon spread, and protect his camp against all further attempts of plunderers; and certain it is, we were never again assailed during our residence in Kûrdistan.

Our march for several days was over a very rugged country, in which there was little cultivation. The pasture appeared excellent, and the valleys were watered by small but clear streams. The great want in Kûrdistan, as in many other parts of Persia, is wood. My Indian friend, Soobadar Syed Hoosein,* when riding with me, remarked the great difference in this particular between the provinces we had travelled through, and his native land. "These proud Persians," said he, "boast of their country; but they have neither shade to protect them from the heat of summer, nor fuel to save them from the cold of winter."

The day he made this observation, the good Soobadar had reason to complain of the want of the latter article; for, as winter was yet distant, it being only the 16th of August, none was furnished, and the cold proved excessive; the water in our tents was frozen, and Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 34° at six in the morning,

As we approached Sennah, the capital of the province of Ardelan, the soil improved, and, if cultivated, would, no doubt, produce abundance of grain; but its rude inhabitants prefer a pastoral life. They are, if we may judge from what we saw, an uncommonly robust race, and appear unchanged in their manners and customs by the twenty-three centuries which have elapsed since the days of Xenophon, who would have no difficulty, if permitted to return from the Elysian fields, to recognize the descendants of the enemies he encountered amidst these wilds. I made this observation to Baharâm Meerzâ, who had been sent by the Waly of Sennah to welcome the Elchee, and remarked, at the same time, the little care or knowledge they had about religion, though all professed that of Mahomed. "It is all very true," he said, "but two or three days will bring you to Sennah,

* Soobadar is the highest rank a native can attain in the Indian army. This gallant soldier is now soobadar major of the body guard of the governor of Madras.

and you will then see that though we are Kûrds, and have a pride in being so, we are not all barbarians."

The evening before we went to Sennah, I read the introductory pages of the history of the Kûrds. It is written by a native; and, according to this patriotic author, all the virtue and courage this world has ever known was nurtured amid the wilds and mountains of Kûrdistan. Its inhabitants, he affirms, attained great glory in former ages, and would have subjected the universe, but for the caution of the prophet Mahomed, who, struck by the fierce look and gigantic form of a Kûrd ambasssador, prayed to God that this formidable race might never be united. This prayer was heard, adds my author; and the warriors of Kûrdistan have ever since been at variance with each other.

Sennah is so surrounded by hills that the town is not seen till you are close to the suburbs. We were pleased with its appearance: the houses are well built; and the gardens and cultivation in its vicinity came in strong and pleasing contrast with the rugged lands through which we had travelled for the last eight days.

Two sons of Aman ollâh Khan, the Waly, or prince, came with three hundred horse to meet, and welcome us to the court of their father. I was delighted with the eldest of these boys. Though only ten years of age, he rode and managed a very spirited charger with great address. In his conversation he was free and unembarrassed, mixing the simplicity of the child with the information of the man. He had, he said, been in all parts of his father's territories, and appeared well acquainted with the various tribes by which they were inhabited, answering every question put to him by the Elchee on this subject with remarkable clearness and correctness.

The day after our arrival, we went to visit the Waly, who received us in a magnificent style. We found him attended by his principal officers; and the two boys, who had come to meet us, were standing close to their father. The Elchee wished them to be seated; but that, he was informed, was against the etiquette of this petty court. That etiquette however was disturbed. A man came into the room, and spoke to the Waly in the Kûrdish dialect. The prince laughed; and on the Elchee asking what was the matter—"Nothing," said he, "except that a spoilt child

of mine, not four years of age, declares he will put himself to death, unless allowed to see you as well as his brothers." The Elchee entreated he might make his appearance, saying he was fond of children, and much flattered by the boy's anxiety to see him. Soon after, in marched this desperate little Kûrd, loaded with fine clothes. He was tolerably bold at first, but took alarm when pressed by the Elchee to sit near him; he appeared particularly startled by the cocked hat and high feather. The Elchee, observing this, took out the feather and gave it him to play with. This act of conciliation was completely successful. After amusing himself with the feather for some time, the little fellow ventured to take up the hat, examined it, and other parts of our dress, and in a few minutes began to chatter in a manner which delighted the father, who seemed much pleased with the attention paid to his favourite.

The Waly having returned the Elchee's visit, and invited us to dine with him, we went to his palace, a small but handsome building. The hall in which we were received was forty feet long, twenty-four broad, and thirty high A facing of white marble covered the walls of this apartment to the height of eight feet, above that it was painted and richly gilt. The chequered gilding of the roof had an appearance like mosaic, which produced a good effect. Adjoining to this hall, and one step more elevated, was a room twenty-four feet by eighteen, connected with the interior of the palace by folding-doors, so admirably finished, and the gilding of which so exactly corresponded with the other ornaments of the apartment, that when shut it was difficult to discover them. The front of the hall was supported by four richly carved and gilt pillars, and opened on a terrace commanding a view of the town. On this terrace was a fountain, adapted to its size and that of the building.

Persia is famous for its carpets; but none I had ever seen surpassed in beauty that on which the Waly and his guests were seated in this hall of his fathers. He appeared to have great pride in introducing the Elchee to the persons by whom he was surrounded. None of them, he said, counted less than eight or nine generations in the service of his family, and some had been its firm and attached adherents during a period of four centuries.

"My country," he concluded, "is above two hundred miles in length, and nearly as much in breadth. We owe and pay allegiance to the kings of Persia, but we are exempted from that severity of rule which often ruins our neighbours, who possess rich plains and wealthy cities. Ardelan presents little temptation to an invader. It abounds in nothing," he added, smiling, "but brave men and hardy horses."

The Waly was pleased to find we had, from perusing the history of Kûrdistan, become acquainted with all the great families of that country, and were familiar with the names and actions of some of the most renowned of his ancestors. He had a copy of the same history, but it wanted some passages which were in that of the Elchee, which he borrowed to have them transcribed. The Elchee was pleased, when his volume was returned, to find an addition, which brought up the history of the Walies of Ardelan to the present date, with a most flattering and highly coloured account of the arrival of the British mission at Sennah; an event which the author, in a truly eastern style, predicted would henceforward be deemed an epoch in the annals of that principality.

The town of Sennah, which lies in N. lat. 35° 12′, enjoys a fine climate; the small valley in which it is situated being protected from the severity of the winters in this elevated country, by the hills around it. The prince and his chiefs live in great luxury, and the inhabitants have all the appearance of enjoying competence, if not affluence. Among them were forty families of Nestorian Christians, the heads of which, with their pastor, visited the Elchee. There were many of the same sect, the good priest informed us, in Kûrdistan, who had resided there ever since its separation from the Greek church, a period of thirteen centuries. As for himself and his little flock, he added, they had a small church at Sennah, and were, as their fathers had been, not only tolerated, but protected by the princes of Ardelan. This may in part be ascribed to their being industrious and useful citizens, as they are almost all either artizans or manufacturers.

From subsequent conversations which the Elchee had with the Waly, it appeared that though the kings of Persia had never attempted to establish their own authoriy over Ardelan, or to

interfere with its internal administration, they have often disturbed its quiet, by fomenting discord in the family of its ruler; and more than once have obtained a temporary influence and power, by aiding a discontented or revolted prince, to overthrow the direct line of succession.

The contrast between the inhabitants of Sennah and of the neighbouring hills is singularly striking. The first are little different in their habits from citizens in Persia, while the latter are even more rude than the wandering tribes of that country. You meet them, watching their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, within five or six miles of the small but luxurious capital, and are surprised to find that it is with pity, not envy, they regard its inhabitants. They glory in the state and splendour of the prince and chiefs to whom they owe hereditary allegiance, but look with contempt on the unwarlike, but more civilized community, with whom those they obey are immediately surrounded.

Hamadan, the ancient Ecbatana, Kermen Shah, once the residence of the mighty Khoosroo; Bagdad and its caliphs, the renowned port of Balsorah, and the southern shores of the Persian Gulph, are all before me. But here these volumes must close. My efforts to amuse, and perhaps inform my readers, are interrupted by circumstances, which, though they forbid promise, warrant a hope, that if we are pleased with each other we may meet again.

74, 79, 83, 85, 89, 94, 97, 111-2, 121, 132-3, 134
160, 253-72, 277

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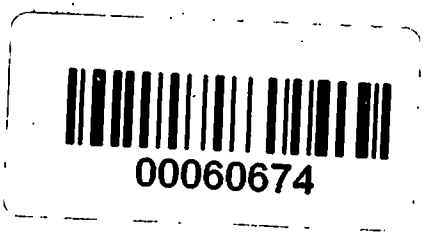
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